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**STRIP FOR
ACTION**

Page 26



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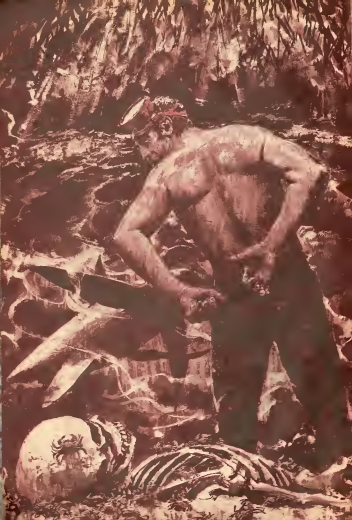
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The Shark God of Motura

Was the black reef *tapu* because of the great white god-shark which lived under it — or did it hold another mystery?

FICTION / WILMON MENARD

SAM POWERS, resident-trader of Motura Atoll, sat off the end of the pier and spit out the discard. His eyes narrowed as he watched the native Polynesians loading their out-rigger-canoes for the noon departure.

Most of the huts had been torn down, the old thatched walls piled high in a burning bonfire. Soon the village would go into action, bent almost double, smoothing and brushing clean the coral sand. It was the customary wind-up of the season when the pearl divers and copra workers went back to their home island of Takaroa, 20 miles to the south.

"He a helluva relief to see the last of 'em!" Sam muttered to himself.

There was a scuffling sound on the veranda, and he started nervously. It was old Runga, the Tahiti, or witch-doctor, who acted as spokesman for the laborers.

"Well?" greeted Sam. "What'd you want?"

Runga squatted respectfully below eye-level of the trader, and studied him with heavy-lidded shrewdness. Finally, he asked in a lanky, rattling voice, "You come back Motura?"

"I've been coming back for the past ten years, haven't I? I always take four months' holiday in Tahiti when you pull out. You know what. What are you getting at?"

Runga cleared his throat with a dry hacking cough. Almost apologetically he said gently, "When you come back Motura you no forget bring money belong me and my people, oh? Two years vama long time wait for what belong us."

Old Runga was referring to the accumulated horroza, separate from

their contract-wages, banked by the trader in Papeete, Tahiti, which represented the percentage-profits, according to law, which went due the native workers from the copra and pearl-shell seasons.

Sam gripped the arms of the wicker-chair and half rose. "How dare you imply I'm not honest, you old hunkum!" he roared.

"My people vama tired waiting for money," Runga said.

"Naturally you're going to get your horroza! I just forgot it last time, that's all." He squirmed angrily. "You think I'm trying to cheat you, huh?"

"My people tell me ask you, as must know," said Runga patiently.

"Well, then you tell them to mind their damned business, and I'll take care of all business matters!" He bent forward and shook a furious finger at the witch-doctor's face. "And something else, too! Next season you and your lazy workers are going to have to do a better day's job. The pearl divers have been buying up too much with the women and boozing. Furthermore, you're going to cut out wasting so much time paying your respects to that shark-god of yours!"

Runga's head lifted slowly, and his eyes met those of the trader's in a curious stare. "Heomako our number-one Atua (God)," he said.

"Well, I'm your number-one boss!" snorted Sam. "I give you work, sell you supplies at a bargain price, and look after all of you. Your first obligation is to me, savvy?"

Runga's eyes shifted out to the South Pacific's shimmering expanse. He pointed a finger to a patch of the reef-floored lagoon. "You take that down now!"

Sam's eyes focused on the crooked pole with the sign TAPU that rose starkly from the high black reef-edge at the northern end of the lagoon. "No, I'll leave it there until I get back. It'll be a warning to anyone who might come here while we're away."

Runga sighed mournfully. "Plenty bad 'bout Tiah."

Runga was referring to Charlie Rawlings, Sam's late trade-partner.

The wicker-chair creaked as Sam angrily shifted his weight. "You liked him because you could cheat him here in the store when I wasn't around. Selling you stuff for almost nothing! We'd have gone bankrupt if it hadn't been for me!" He shot a spiteful look at the TAPU sign. "I told him to keep off that reef, didn't I? And so did you. But he wouldn't listen. Kept right on fishing and swimming there. He was bound to get into trouble with that shark-god of yours!"

Runga nodded heavily. "All same, plenty too bad. Tiah number-one friend me and my people."

Sam's lip curled. Yeah, he thought, your old pal Tiah, always patting you on the back, giving you cigarettes, cracking jokes, boozing down in the village with all of you, laying up with your women? Well, where did it get him? Now you see Charlie, now you didn't. One day, at noon, your precious Tiah was sitting on this very veranda, drunk and cussing the boat. When you came looking for him two hours later for a bottle of rum, he wasn't here, was he? Decided to cool off and have a swim off your tapa reef. And so Heomako, your Shark-God, got him!

Runga rose to leave. Sam growled

at him "When the Moana finishes loading at Takaro tomorrow, you tell Captain Riley to get up here fast. I'll be packed and waiting."

Two hours later the natives' outrigger-canoes were just tiny black speckles on the sparkling South Pacific, moving steadily toward the low blue haze on the horizon that marked Takaro. Then, as always, Sam became uneasy about his complete abandonment, the silence, the sense of crushing isolation and loneliness.

As he sat staring out to the lagoon, the endless days of boisterous sunlight and hazy nights passed in review. Ten long years with nothing to relieve the boredom. Always the same mocking mist of mystery over the protective coral reefs. The sky was blank as a sheet of paper, every cloud dissipated, crissed by the blinding sun.

Then he thought of his plan, his escape from Motara, and a chuckle gurgled in his fat throat. "Rango and his crowd will never come back next season when they get word I've closed down and gone for good. Motara will be a lost island, with poor Charlie's ghost walking the long coral beaches."

The silence of Motara became more absolute after sundown. Now there were no sounds of laughter or singing, or flickering of lantern lights from the natives' village. The evening trade-winds began to blow steadily from the south-west.

Sam roused himself from his chair on the veranda. He looked around and shivered not entirely from the sharp chill. "Damned spooky



George S. Gale

"My name is Jollytime. I am a crook. You have money in the safe. Jollytime wants the money in the safe . . ."

place," he murmured. "I'll be glad to see the last of it."

In the small kitchen behind his quarters he ate a tin of sandwiches in tomato sauce and some hard biscuits, washing them down with a bottle of warm beer. How refreshing it would be to be back in Papeete, where one could have a good meal and an iced bottle of beer — and night-long orgies in the Hotel du Pacifique with a fragrant, soft-bodied French-Tahitian or Chinese-born Tahitian whore.

When he went to bed on his sagging canvas cot, he lay awake a long time, fretful because of the uncommon silence. Even the barbarous chantings and drumming of the natives in pagan homage to their taller white sharks-gods were preferable to this conscious stillness.

The next day, before noon, he was finished with the last of his packing and crating. He strolled down to the customary southern point of the atoll to watch for the trading-schooner, the Moana, out of Papeete, on its course for Takaro.

He sighted her almost immediately, sailing steadily in the narrow channel between the two atolls.

"She'll be over here before sunset," he celebrated aloud. "Then we should be off and away before it gets too dark to clear the lagoon."

He waved in the direction of the schooner, knowing that Captain Riley would have his binoculars trained on the coral strand to sight him. It would be good to have some yarns and jokes with the skipper on the voyage south to Tahiti.

Sam returned to the veranda and made himself comfortable in the wicker chair. He made a slow tally, by sight, of his possessions neatly stacked around him. His eyes at last came to rest on the metal money-box on the table at his side. It was packed tight with Pacific French francs, gold coins and pearls.

He ran blunt fingers over its top and spoke aloud. "I've been lucky, very damned lucky. It could have



"I don't know how long I'm going to be here, my daughter has not frozen back on earth."

Australia's first shipwreck

THE BARRIEN ROCKS off the Monte Bello islands, off the north-west coast of Western Australia, were the scene of Australia's first known shipwreck.

The ship lost there, the English privateer *Troyal*, was also the first English ship to sight the unknown Australian continent.

The *Troyal* sailed from London in 1621 on an expedition to Java. But she was driven south of her course, and ran hard aground on a submerged shelf of rocks on the night of May 26, 1622.

Captain John Brooke ordered soundings to be taken, which showed three fathoms of water alongside. He attempted to work the *Troyal* off the rocks by tacking her, but the rocks were sharp and the ship stuck fast. She was soon waterlogged and doomed.

When he saw that there was no hope of saving the *Troyal*, Brooke ordered her longest boat to be swung out. But the boat could hold only 36 men out of a complement of 142.

Brooke sent three men off under the command of the mate, Thomas Wright, to try to reach Java and seek help for the other survivors. But a day or two later the winds began to break up, and Brooke decided to try to reach Java himself with more men as a small ship.

Brooke and his companions set off with one barrel of water and 40 pounds of ship's biscuit, and reached Java after 50 days. Wright and the other party in the longest boat arrived safely.

But no rescue vessel was sent out to look for the remainder of the men on the wreck. Brooke had known before he set out that his only chance of saving them would have been to meet the ship on the high seas within a day or two. He knew that the 67 men left behind on the disintegrating wreck stood no chance of surviving for a month or more.

Brooke's decision to leave the wreck with the bulk of his desired crew and on board must have been a hard one, but it cannot be criticised.

He was the only man left who could navigate, and he could save the last survivors only by abandoning the rest. If he had not, he and the other 166 men left on the wreck would all have died there.

gone the other way. I might have had to share with Charlie." He relaxed contentedly. "One thing I know, I'd never pass this way again, never, never, so help me God! I've never thus earned my escape from the god-forsaken break of coral!"

Runga and his laxy gang could yell their heads off for all the good it would do them. There were no papers, no signatures, nothing to justify any action by the British courts in Tahiti. By the time Runga and a delegation from Tahiti came to Papeete, he'd be thousands of miles away, in Europe or America. He had earned his retirement, and no one could stop him now!

The heat became intense just after mid-day, and tropical torpor finally overcame him. His head fell on his chest, and a few minutes later he was snoring as other signs still clamped between his yellowed teeth.

When he awoke, the trade-winds had taken away and the lagoon's surface was only lightly touched by a vagrant breeze. Small wavelets broke on the coral rimmed so softly, so humbly that the roar of the surf surging regularly across the barrier-reef was amplified and seemed very close. There and destiny appeared to be strangely suspended.

A tone of anxiety, perhaps born of a segment of a dream, was running

through his mind. He started with brooding eyes at the TAPU sign on the sacred reef of Motu. You should really have a last look before you leave, he told himself. You won't be coming back, you know. H'E settle your mind for once and all.

Sam stepped quickly, placing his clothes neatly on the table covering the money-box. Then, carrying diver's goggles and rubber line, he strode down the palm-shaded street. The coral shore-heads, just above

water, extended his stepping-stones in the direction of the black sacred reef of Motu.

He reached the high ledge, and as he crept up over its edge he stopped momentarily. There was that fishing again of anxiety, remembering the natives' awe and reverence of this dark coral reef. Then he gave a forced chuckle and continued across the reef to the pole.

He tested the TAPU warning, and found the pole still firmly wedged into the deep crevice. It would last a long time. Now, slowly, he approached the seaward edge and poured down into the water.

The murky water was untroubled, and he could see very deep, at least to where the blue mark of the dangerous coral trim and fans began, below which were the foraging areas of sharks, barracuda and conger-eels.

With a slight shudder Sam stopped away from the edge and glanced back toward the beach and trading-stone. "I'm not so much around here," he exclaimed. "Best to leave well enough alone!"

But he finally turned back, adjusted the firm and lowered himself carefully into the water. He tilted his huge white ear, fitted the diver's goggles over his eyes, and somersaulted into the depth.

When he reached a drop of about 30 feet, he had to swim strongly against the increasing pressure. At 30 feet he swam sharply around the great sphincters of poisonous branching-coral, like an ornate candlestick, which marked the entrance to the huge underwater grove. He coughed, then turned and headed directly into the cavern.

Just inside its mouth the shroud of purple shadow enveloped him, like the tide of night. The passage beyond seemed to diminish in circumference, and the confines of



and skeletons were softened by the diffused underwater radiance.

Sam swam warily, with short breaststrokes, looking only shallowly with his flared feet, all his senses alerted to the subtle dangers around him. Such caves were the natural haunts of crabs and various forms of sea-life, the marine centipedes, the black urchins with deadly breathing quills, and the ghastly spider-crabs whose far-reaching claws could snap off a man's finger. And it

yesterday that I was in here.

He was in a low, round chamber, seemingly hewn by human hands out of the mass top of the reef. The phenomenon was the result of the natural percolation and erosion caused by sea action in the centuries past, causing the soluble limestone to filter through the cracks and interstices of the porous reef, leaving a perfect shaped tomb. Ten feet above him the roof of the vault was crisscrossed by narrow fissures which

polish the bones. Even the small mound of Charlie's clothes had disappeared.

When Sam's fingers gingerly touched the skull they tingled as if in contact with an electric current. Turning the skull carefully, he saw the spiderly pattern of the skull-fracture.

So that was what the heavy blow with the iron bar had made that fateful afternoon!

He gave a low astonished whistle between his teeth. "Well, well, Charlie, there wasn't much use my fastening this wire around your throat, just to make sure, was there?" He touched the rusty loops, now loosely encircling the vertebrae at the base of the skull like a primitive ornament. "And I sure ripped you over the head harder than I thought."

Sam settled down on his haunches and looked about appreciatively. How lucky to have found this underwater grotto, and to have had the courage to exploit it to the limit.

It would have been impossible to bury Charlie in the hard coral ground of the steel skull, and to have tossed the body over the side into the outer ocean would have been too risky. The fishermen from the village and the pearl divers might have sighted the floating corpse. Sam recalled again the groveling task of swimming with the long rope through the underwater tunnel and then, after rising to the surface, pulling the weighted, drunken body after him.

The small crabs were now venturing out of the eye-sockets, their antennae flattening like blinking babies. Behind, the other great scavengers were emerging from their retreats.

Sam grimaced at the skull. "Now, don't look at me like that, Charlie." His voice echoed weirdly in the natural crypt. "And don't expect me to feel any remorse. Having a man, like I did you, could only end one way, and you got it. You made fun of me for reading my books, keeping my brain active, thinking about other things than boating, wasting time with the native dives, mounting their women. So all you have to feel sorry for is a pack of lousy, lying, thieving Tuamotuanes, just the lovely crabs and the sad snails to keep you company."

"I just thought I'd come down and tell you that your pearls and the share of the trading profits, per agreement, reverted to me - and so off I go into well deserved retirement, sooner than I planned."

(Continued on page 64)

The huge sawfish of Australia

ONE OF THE STRANGEST offshoots of the numerous shark family is the sawfish, two species of which are found in Australian waters.

The sawfish family is midway between the sharks and the rays in form. The sawfish has a wide, flattened body with large pectoral fins behind the head which suggest the flaps of a wing.

It has two large dorsal fins of equal size set well back on its body towards the tail. It is colored brownish grey above and white below, with large shining bony scutes.

Its eye is a long, narrow bar steadily set of cartilage carrying 20 to 30 teeth a side, growing horizontally like the teeth of a saw, it has a secondary arrangement of flat pointing teeth well back in the mouth.

The larger of Australia's two species grows to a length of about 24 feet, and a specimen that may weigh up to half a ton.

Sawfish live down on sandy bottoms close inshore, like their closest kin. They have not yet proved dangerous to man in Australian waters, although a large one was once reported to have cut a swimming man in two in India.

Sawfish are found all around the Australian coastline. They can enter close back water and survive in it for a considerable time. They have been found near the Mitchell Falls on the Gilbert River in north-west Queensland, more than 200 miles from the sea.

In October, 1928, a 16-foot specimen was hauled up and landed off Moolby by the crew of the Moolby surf boat. A coat of it was kept in the Australian Museum in Sydney.

one collided with a giant conger-eel, it would be all over within seconds. He had seen pearl divers' mutilated bodies, attesting to the ferocity of this killer of the lagoons.

Then, thought Sam fearfully, is like the passage along the river of death. He could fully understand the natives' terror of the black reef and the coral world below it.

Sam swam on and on, making almost blindly now, guided chiefly by vigilance and long underwater experience. His lungs felt as if they would burst, his ears began their warning cracklings. Then, abruptly, he entered an area of growing light. Confidently, relieved, he headed upward, and a moment later his head rose above the dark surface of a pool inside the reef. He gulped air noisily back into his cramped lungs, and the freshening sensation of new suffocation passed.

Then he removed his goggles and gazed wonderingly around. Nothing's changed, he observed. Seems just like

admitted air and light. For away Sam could hear the muffled sound of the sea, like a deep, mournful sighing.

He pulled himself up over the slimy edge and then rose slowly, apprehensively, staring in dismay at the grisly sight.

"Jesus God!" he whispered hoarsely. "That is no mortal!"

A human skeleton was lying on the tired ledge above him, and, as he moved closer, an army of green crabs scuttled out of the cage of rib-bones, escaping into the coral fissures. Two smaller ones drew down slowly into the eye-sockets of the skull, squaring slightly for space, and they made the ghastly effect of winking, bulging eyes.

Sam shook his head in growing respect for the crawling legions who had offaced, after death, all that was human and familiar. The crabs had carved away the decomposing flesh and gnaw from the coral under corpse, and afterwards had come the slow, relentless sea-crabs to patiently



THEFT FROM THE CYCLOPS BUDDHA

He staked his future on a "human fly" climb after one of the world's largest gems . . .
FACT / ROBERT F. DORR

TORRENTS OF RAIN poured mercilessly into his face that moonless night last May when a splintery American named Mike Ebbings learned the hard way what it's like to be an insect crawling across a man's face.

Ebbings used black and tackle to anchor himself from the crown atop the largest standing Buddha in North Asia, the 83-foot, one-eyed "Cyclops" Buddha statue which looms above the ancient Bopansa Temple Ground in remote mountains of south central Korea. In the rain-lashed night, observed only by his girlfriend who stood far below fearing that every movement would send him plummeting to his death, 31-year-old Ebbings hung himself into space, repelled downward, and descended across the face of the Buddha—a human fly, bumping its splinters.

"Harry, Mike! You must hurry!"

The weak feminine voice, muffled by the downpour, reached Ebbings as he stood his dangling body by clasping the jutting eyebrow of the massive Buddha's head. Groping blindly for a foothold, he kicked back and forth until his feet found the out-thrust upper lip of the statue's face. He balanced

himself awkwardly, then began to lower himself, aware that a slip on the moist stone surface of the statue would send him plunging earthward.

Now inches in front of him, slack, and glossy in the rain, the single eye of the Cyclops Buddha seemed to stare at Ebbings, defying him. It was a solid green emerald, one of the largest in the world, valued at \$374,000 and cut with the precision known only to a master jeweler. When this 300-year-old temple ground had been restored and the statue presented a decade ago in 1962, the Republic of Korea (South Korea) authorities had decided to lure tourists by implanting the emerald—an officially labelled Korea's "national treasure number one" and previously kept in a Seoul museum—into the Buddha's head.

"Harry, Mike!"

His water-soaked fingers lost the hammer! It went flying away, bouncing off the stone torso of the Buddha, plummeting toward Eric Ebbings named, but welded his chest by hand and discovered that the emerald's mooring was loose. Heart-beat pounding, he clawed at the moist edges of the stone, closed his hands around it, and yanked it free!





"I've got her, Eui! I've got the damned thing!"

Below in the rain-swept temple yard, 23-year-old Kim Eui was jolted, not by the "boom boom" of the falling hammer which came within an inch of crushing her skull, but by a sudden and unexpected sound behind her. Eui turned to see a bulky military weapons carrier striding its way up the narrow road from the nearest village.

Suddenly, a searchlight clicked on. Its searing yellow beam blinded Eui, outlining her tall, supple body against the base of the statue. Uniformed men piled out of the truck and a voice crackled over a megaphone: "Son-of-bah eui! (Raise your hands!) Eui saw in the harsh glare of artificial light that the truck

not Vietnam, and that he'd just become a common criminal caught in the act.

These stocky, armed young men, clanking at him with automatic rifles weren't like the Communist guerrillas Ebbing had fought on the battlefield in Vietnam. They were cops, in a country friendly to and closely allied with the United States. If they grabbed him now, pulling off his dramatic jewel heist, they would have the full support of US authorities in prosecuting him.

And a Korean jail wasn't Mike Ebbing's idea of where he wanted to spend the rest of his life. He made his decision instantly. He grabbed the girl's arm and propelled her toward their jeep. Another warning beamed over the megaphone as he shouted

combat with South Korean troops there before being discharged with a bronze star and several purple hearts.

Ebbing had become friendly with an itinerant American businessman, Joe Valdez, from Pasadena, California, who'd given him a standing invitation: "If you decide not to go home after the war, Mike, come back to Hangeul-land (Korea) and work for me. My shipping company doesn't make much money, but I need a young guy to help and I'd pay you enough to live on."

Maybe it's a fluke for adventure. Maybe it's the inherent stubborn streak most people attribute to Mike Ebbing's character. More likely, it's just a desire to avoid a banishment outside existence. Whatever drives Ebbing's personality, he's spent the last five years living in a modest flat in Seoul's Han River Apartments and working for the shipping firm.

Ebbing left the company for awhile to try a DAC job (Department of the Army contract), went through a short-lived marriage to a sweet Korean girl ("she wanted to go to the States and I didn't"), and composed up his emerald theft only after meeting a new girl, Kim Eui, in the early spring of 1972.

A lousy day at the office Ebbing's small shabby firm was losing money and a docking strike had killed the month's profits. Ebbing was hating the bottle too much lately, even leaving work to start drinking early, and he knew he was getting too much like many other Americans who lived overseas — disgruntled, irritable, and preoccupied in alcohol. That didn't prevent him, on April 10, 1972, from snatching into his favorite bar in Seoul's entertainment district and sitting alone, chugging champagne (new wine).

It was snowing. Ebbing spotted the girl the moment he stepped outside and he had to skirt around patches of ice as he followed her through the narrow, name-plastered alleys of the downtown entertainment district. She was quickening her pace and he knew that if he didn't speed up, he would never find out what she looked like from the front.

Unexpectedly, the girl stopped to peer into a dress shop. She stood for a long instant in a careless pose, one shapely leg thrown back at right angles from the folds of her coat, her head cocked askance, her long satin hair brunched up against the coat's collar. She was willowy, shoulder-length to Ebbing's lean six feet, her assets distributed on the lithe body so that her height seemed about

Sea-snakes in Australian waters

AUSTRALIAN POSEIDONS contain the remains of many kinds of prehistoric reptiles which became adapted to life in the sea, but most have been extinct for millions of years, and the only truly aquatic reptiles in the ocean today are the turtles and sea-anakes.

Several kinds of sea snakes are found in Australian waters. They are rather like eels in form, with deep, flattened bodies and soft, loose, and flattened scales.

They have become completely adapted to life in the ocean, and are almost helpless when they are cast up on the shore. Their bodies are no longer suitable for movement on dry land, only for swimming.

Sea snakes are able to stay submerged for periods of several hours at a time. Their nostrils are closed by a muscular valve, and when under water some kinds can apparently obtain oxygen from the water by breathing some and absorbing it in their skin long intestines.

In the water, sea snakes' movements are swift and graceful. They feed mostly on fish, swallowing fish. Old specimens have been found with barnacles and small bits of seaweed growing on their bodies.

The most common and best-known sea snake in Australian waters has a bright yellow belly, a very dark colored back, and a pattern of dark spots on its paddle-shaped tail. It grows to a length of about four feet.

In common with most sea snakes, its venom is very potent. But it seldom bites people, and fatalities are rare.

was emblazoned with the five-pointed flower insignia of the National Police.

"We've caught! Mike Ebbing told himself. The stolen emerald in his hand, Ebbing repelled downward across the chest, groin, and legs of the giant stone Buddha.

He crashed into a heap in the mud at Eui's side, only feet from their jeep. Drenched, gasping, confused by the blinding searchlight, he peered at the police vehicle 300 yards away and saw rifle-armed police spring to the ground while the man with the megaphone screamed "Dungkyun! Mare! (Don't move!)"

Ebbing swallowed, looked at his jeep, and wondered whether to surrender or try a break. He reminded himself that this was Korea,

into her car, "Eui! We've got to try a break for it! Stick with me!"

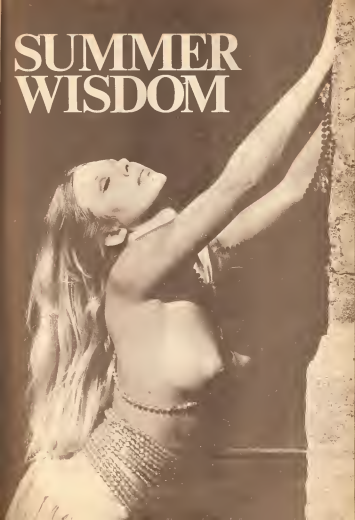
They clambered into the jeep just as the police opened fire, muffled flashes blinking against the rain, bullets chugging singly into the side of the vehicle.

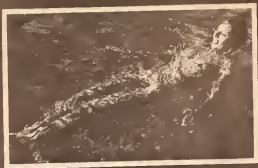
Lean, grim-faced Michael R. Ebbing, originally from Alexandria, Virginia, belongs to the colony of several hundred Americans who've escaped routine living by making their homes in the Republic of Korea where 43,000 GIs still man an uneasy truce line.

Ebbing served with the US Army in Korea in 1963-65 in a sensitive intelligence job for which he received training in the Korean language. Later, he went to Vietnam to serve in

(Continued on page 77)

SUMMER WISDOM





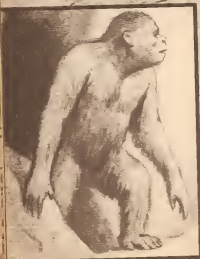
SUMMER WISDOM

Pauline's been down
for a swim today,
between the old rocks
at the edge of the bay,

and now she's asleep
where the warm wind blows,
taking it easy,
because she knows

that the pleasantest things
in life are three—
the sun, the wind
and the cool deep sea . . .





ON THE TRAIL OF THE YETI

Another expedition is now in the Himalayas in search of the answer to the last and eeriest of Nature's mysteries.

FACT / E. R. YARHAM

TOWARD THE END of last year a party of six American scientists left on a 15-month expedition into eastern Nepal, with the aim of penetrating into the Arun river valley between the two Himalayan giants, Everest and Kanchenjunga. This is the land of the yeti, the Abominable Snowman. Nepalese natives say these creatures live somewhere in the upper reaches of the valley, and the explorers hope to spot a specimen of the elusive tribe.

Slippery customers the yeti may be, but according to report they can make their presence conspicuously obvious when it suits their purpose. Not so long back some were maliciously routing village flour mills, and a year or two ago other yeti were making an unmistakable nuisance of themselves by undoing every job of work undertaken by the villagers.

They uprooted the potatoes, unroofed the houses, and dented the kachas hung out to dry. The victims of these Pankish antics dealt simply and traditionally (if severely) with the rogues by placing large bowls of

chang (home-brewed rice beer) in prominent places near their houses.

Next night the Snowmen, intimidated as apparently only yeti can get, were easily slaughtered. Just a folk tale that, of course, but there is a lot more to the yeti than mere fable, and the rice is not so easily disposed of as this single story might suggest.

The enigma of the Abominable Snowman, whom the yeti, has dogged western explorers of the Himalayas for the past half century, ever since the first Everest reconnaissance of 1921. Eric Shipton, one of the

best-known Himalayan climbers of this century, and that Sherpa Tenzing, who climbed Everest with Sir Edmund Hillary in 1953, told him that he, together with a large number of other Sherpas, had seen a yeti at a distance of about 25 yards.

In his account Shipton wrote: "He describes it as half man, half beast, about five feet six inches tall, covered with reddish-brown hair but with a hairless face. Whatever it was that he saw, I am convinced of his sincerity. That night as we were settling down to sleep, he remarked:

(Continued on page 65)



LEFT

A line of wide, deep yeti tracks across a high Himalayan snowfield.

INSERT TOP

Close-up of yeti tracks, with 'chicken' feet for comparison. The tracks are not the largest known — but note how the creature's weight has crunched down into the snow.

INSERT BELOW

An artist's reconstruction of a yeti, from Dr Praxin's description.

RIGHT

The Chief Lama of Kunjumb village holding the alleged yeti scalp which was sent to Sir Edmund Hillary in 1950.

THE LEAD NIGHTINGALE

Nearly 20 years after he attacked the girl, Big Lon came back to his mountain home. Now he was a big success, a star. But nobody had yet forgotten the other thing...

FICTION / ROBERT G. HALL

FOR SOME unexplained reason big Lon McCabe, the country boy with the golden larynx, was visiting Mount Slide, his boyhood home. It had been a long time since Big Lon had seen his people. That might have been the reason for his visit. Or was it something else?

With TV appearances, night club engagements, recording interviews and kissing women, Big Lon had little time to spare. His current release, *Godbreak*, already running hot and climbing the charts, had beckoned him into the limelight again.

So why was he taking time off when he should be bring it up in the winners' circle, wined and dined by agents, sipping caviar for the *Hocking* paper and magazine reporters?

Maybe Big Lon still remembered that spring was the best time of the year in Mount Slide. The golden willows were resplendent at that season. Or it could have been nostalgia for the songbirds held in "The Song."

I'm certain he remembered those. It was at one of those festivals that he first saw Carmen Cheeta.

That was a long time ago, 19 years to be exact. But it could be that he knew the festival started tomorrow. It could be that he wanted to be there for some other reason. But he knew some compulsion about Carmen, for instance?

Carmen Cheeta is my older sister. Her marriage to Andre Bretton is still holding together, as it has for 18 years. Not many men would have taken Carmen Cheeta, after that night at The Song. But Andre did.

Andre is a big man physically, as strong as a Mallor ball, quick tempered and emotional. But with Carmen Cheeta he's as gentle as a rabbit. For some reason Carmen Cheeta can do no wrong in Andre's eyes.

People at Mount Slide never talk about what happened to her that night at The Song. They were given to talk about almost everything else but that subject wasn't very healthy.

Mount Slide people can be close-mouthed when it comes to their women. Even more close-mouthed when something happens to one of them. But that doesn't say they've forgotten — and that includes Andre.

I haven't forgotten one single detail of that early dawn at The Song, 19 years ago. Andre hasn't either. He was reading the newspaper as he ate his lunch at the gravel quarry when he saw the story about Big Lon coming home. He didn't say a word, but I was watching and I saw his hairy hands clenching the paper tighter.

Even the women in The Song haven't forgotten the night Big Lon hurt Carmen Cheeta. But only once have I heard anyone make an open statement about it. Old Toomey Ram, one of the cronies of The Song, stood there looking at Carmen Cheeta that dawn, lying there too weak and hurt even to stagger home.

"Any man who hurts a woman like Big Lon did —" he began, but he left the sentence unfinished. He stooped and picked up his corner of the blanket-made stretcher so we could carry Carmen Cheeta home.

They say time is a cure-all. Carmen Cheeta has been married to Andre for a long time and they have a daughter now, Marina, a younger reflection of her mother and every bit as pretty.

Tate McCabe, Lon's older brother and Tate's wife live next to us on the Yarrow Road at The Song. They are the only people Lon has on the mountain, so I was sure I'd see him when he came home.

Big Lon wouldn't waste the opportunity of letting everyone know how he had made it to the top. He ago demanded that much. And it would be convenient for him to pretend he had forgotten what had happened 19 long years ago.



We expected to see Leo's imported, left-wheel-driven Mustang climb the gaily rutted Yarnum Road, but we were disappointed. Big Leo came in on his own two feet, singing, head tossed high, proud and a giant.

A lot of stories and down-right lies might have been manufactured around Big Leo but one fact remained — he had a voice and it could charm even the nightingales. Listening to him was an emotional experience. He possessed pathos and love and thunder that could swell and drown you in a single note. And he could wind himself up in one of his wretched and songs and have you crying and feeling glad you were. That's what Big Leo could do.

And the giant with the golden layons was a born showman. His clothes, every color of the rainbow, and rings on his fingers held stories as big as chicken eggs.

I was wondering how he would look when he came home. Everyone was, I think, and he didn't disappoint us. We had to remember that he wasn't a boy any more. He was in his forties now, and had led a life of ease. He should be pot-bellied at least.

But Big Leo wasn't. He was a towering six-foot-three giant, with wide shoulders, tapered body, a bounce in his step. He looked incredibly healthy, without so much as a strand of grey in his black hair.

He came striding up the Yarnum Road, strumming his open-mouth guitar and singing Godfreit, and I think we all tended to forget and for an instant we loved him and felt proud because he was of us and he had come home.

Such a picky paper. The kids were to him, because they didn't know any better. But how could they know about Carmen Chasta and that night?

Mamma stood beneath the big split gum with another girl. They were too big and shy to run behind a singing man. But they wanted to, and it showed on their faces.

"Uncle Ralph, who's that man?" she called out.



The fantastic stick insects

THE AUSTRALIAN stick insects — members of the order phasmoda — are among the great masters of camouflage of the animal world. While other creatures conceal themselves with color, these insects use their entire body as a disguise.

The stick insects have long, thin, attenuated bodies and stiff fragile legs, so that they resemble dried twigs of the plants they live among. Some species may be more than a foot long.

These slow-moving, vegetation insects live on eucalypts, wattle and grasses, and avoid their disguise to avoid the attention of predators. The stick insect often extends its first pair of legs in front of its head as a projection of its body, and holds the others close against its body to further the illusion.

Many species of stick insect have the habit of falling to the ground at once when they are disturbed, and then lying there without moving for long periods.

If attacked and grasped by a leg, they are capable of coming off as a lizard sheds its tail. Young specimens are capable of growing their bodies again, although these additional sections seldom regain full size.

A few species of stick insect which are very common occasionally threaten to damage forests, and control measures may have to be taken against them some day to restore the balance of the ecology.

I looked at her for a long time. She was so damned beautiful, so lovely, and Big Lon was singing a sad song that touched you inside.

"It's Big Lon coming home to see his brother —"

Her gummy mouth softened into a smile. Her eyes sparkled like dipped brown pebbles in a creek.

"Is he staying long, Uncle Ralph?"

"I dunno."

"Say, I've seen his face before. He's the Godfreck man. Why, he's famous, he's a star," she said sitting crossed at his knee closer. "And he's here in Mount Slide."

"Yeah, that's right," I muttered. "As large and as ugly as he."

"He's not ugly, Uncle Ralph," she said, not understanding. "He's a real hunk. Don't you like him Uncle Ralph?"

"He's a good singer."

"But you don't like him?"

I shrugged, but her eyes were on me trying to understand. She was too persistent.

"It's his clothes, I guess. I'm not in his generation or something."

He saw us now and headed our way throwing the guitar over his shoulder like a gun.

"Ralph! You ain't skinny any more."

His big hand reached out and crunched mine. It reminded me that he was strong and a sadist.

He looked away and saw Marma.

"Who's the brown-eyed angel, Ralph?" There was more than a passing interest in his words and his eyes that washed over her.

"Carmen Chasta's daughter."

If I expected him to wince then I

wasted my time. Already he had turned to Marma. His big hands were on her shoulders, and he was smiling and talking softly to her but they had known each other for a long time.

I was glad Andre was carrying gravel at the quarry, awful glad and Carmen had gone down to the store in her old Ford, and you could hear that coming a mile away. Big Lon's

luck was still holding out and I didn't know if I should be happy or sad.

The all-night songfest at The Sing was the best ever, thanks to Big Lon, damn his beautiful voice. I think everyone forgot about him hearing Carmen Chasta, or perhaps it was just convenient for the others to let their memories dim this once. Big Lon sang his songs. He captivated them all. He captivated Marma most of all.

I saw Andre at the edge of the crowd. I went over to him to see his gun and we walked off into the scrub together.

"Does Marma know anything at all about Big Lon?"

He shook his head. "No, Ralph. And why should she?"

"Maybe you should tell her."

"I'm not going to tell her about her mother." His mouth went tight.

He had a point, but I had to say what was on my mind.

"Marma's a young girl. Lon is one of them gilded pop-ables. Maybe you should tell her."

He gave me a frightening look. "Lon wouldn't dare, Ralph. Not here, not again."

I hoped he was right, but I had seen the look of adoration in Marma's eyes.

Later, when Andre had gone off on his own as one of his black needs, I saw Marma on her own



"My last boss fired me for getting fresh."



"We're going to have to transfer Perkins out of quality control."

looking like she had been visited by the fiery godmother. She raced towards me, and that uncertain feeling inside of me grew into something big.

"Uncle Ralph, Uncle Ralph." She stopped and caught her breath. "Big Lon, you know what he said? He heard me sing and said I was good, not just good, fantastic. And he's going to arrange a TV audition for me when he gets back to Melbourne."

I shook my head. What could it say? What could anyone say? Maybe Andre would get drunk like he sometimes did and pass out before Marlene had time to tell him her news. I hoped so, anyhow.

On the fourth night of the songfest, Big Lon didn't show up. It gave me an idea - something born from frustration. But it was a compulsion and I was driven to it. I walked down the mountain thinking it over, and knocked on brother Tule's door firmly.

Such a surprise. Neither Tule nor Lon opened the door, but an attractive woman of about 28, tall and shapely with a nicely chiseled face. There was a hardness around her eyes and tiny crow's feet at the corners of her mouth. But her hair was magnificent, a red fire tinged with gold, and that was what caught my breath.

"Yes" she asked in a toneless voice.

"I'm looking for Big Lon."

"Big Lon isn't in." The smile was artificial and set. "Who are you?"

"Ralph. I live next door. Next

door is about half a mile away, I guess that's why I haven't seen you until now."

"I came last night, late, that's more likely the reason. You would have been asleep. There wasn't a light on the mountain after ten."

"Mountain people go to bed early," I grunted.

I took better stock of her. She was wearing a blue housecoat, and by

the way it clung to her body I guessed very little else. She took a step through the door, and stole up her eyes were wild and big but at the same time frank and honest. I think I liked her.

"Something on your mind? You can tell me if there is."

"Perhaps," I hedged.

"Anything to do with a pretty young thing called Marne?" She was up here yesterday, I knew.

"Was she? I didn't know."

"Something else you probably don't know. Lon is with her someplace tonight. Was that what you wanted to say?"

I grabbed her shoulders and shook her, not knowing what I was doing. "You're lying." I decided I didn't like her after all. She was one of those city types.

"Why should I lie?" she asked.

She had a point. I stood there feeling silly with my hands still on her. The housecoat popped now and the tops of her breasts showed. I saw a white scar, and I thought of Carmen Chese and then Marne. I felt sick.

She was chuckling, now laughing. It wasn't nice to hear the way she did it. It ran up and down my spine like hard razor blades.

Then she did an unpleasant thing. She tore the housecoat open, baring herself.

"Take a good hard look, neighbor."



"Tell him to take an oarick one and the five of a pethon mixed with elephant stuff, and call me in the morning."

She had firm breasts that stuck out like gun barrels, very pointed and erect. The nipples were larger than 50 cent pieces.

But despite this initial beauty, there were scars, bruises, discolorations. The scars looked as if rough fingerprints had stroked and rubbed across the tender flesh.

I was seeing Carmen Cheats all over again that terrible morning in The Saug, her cotton blouse torn to shreds, and her girlish breasts . . . I was a kid at the time and it had stuck with me all these years.

"Come on in. No one's home. Tule and his wife are at the songfest."

mountain and back where he belongs."

She stood there waiting.

"I can't." I wanted to tell her how much I wanted to see him gone, but that wasn't what she wanted to hear.

"I say you can."

She pressed close again, kissing hard, uninhibited and I remembered what it was like to hold a hot woman again. It had been a long time since Rita had shown such warmth and passion, before we were married.

"Why should I do anything to get Big Lon to go?"

She countered with a question of her own. "Why do you think he came back here?"

I felt angry and hated Lon. "Get to the point, Linda."

"He hates everything he touches. It makes problems and trouble, I don't want trouble, not up here on the mountain. He can't always win."

She guided my finger because she felt she had to pay something to get what she wanted. She wanted Lon off the mountain and she wanted that pretty badly.

"I agree, he can't always win," I said thickly.

"He's important, you know." She said it quite casually.

It was all so crazy, I was sitting on a bed next to a basket who'd made me hot for her, and I should have been looking for Big Lon before he hurt Marina. But I stayed where I was.

"I don't know if I love him, but he makes a lot of money and I like money. It buys everything you want."

The subtle thing burning in her eyes was revealing.

"You hate him, don't you, Linda?" I said, pleased at my discovery.

"I - hate - him -"

She said it so slowly, emphasizing each word. She lay back, hands reaching. So for a little while we forgot about Big Lon and his sedum. We were strangers, but friendly strangers, not really strangers at all. Our needs reached a plateau where there could be no turning back or compromise, not even a faint denial.

Later she lay in my arms, limp and relaxed, her body glistening with a sheen of perspiration. Then I washed everything, including me, from my mind. Andre had said "Big Lon wouldn't hurt." I got off the bed quickly, leaving Linda with a startled look on her face.

I ran blindly from Tule's house and worked my way up the mountain, along side tracks that I hadn't taken for 19 years.

If what Linda had said was right then, Big Lon was preoccupied with Carmen Cheats. But she was safe with Andre - Marina wasn't.

I was pacing a long time before I reached The Saug, locked in the moonlight.

That's when I heard a woman scream. The same timbre, the same urgency. The same prior desperation.

She stood there in the clearing, the moonlight shafting down on her, a very frightened child, frozen by something she could see. As I ran my heart pounded and a sob tore from inside of me to fall strangled at my own ears.

(Continued on page 76)

The lost woman of Normanby

THE LAST EVIDENCE of a 100-year old Australian mystery is a lonely grave in the old cemetery at Cucktown in north Queensland. There is no name on the headstone, only the simple inscription, "Here lies the Normanby Woman."

The woman was first seen in 1885 by a young English policeman, Charles Jodrell, who was out riding near Normanby in search of wild horses. He found her lying with a tribe of Aborigines in a remote and little known area of the Cape York Peninsula.

Jodrell saw that though the woman was naked like the rest of the tribe, she was only semi-naked and not dark-skinned. She had long fair hair and frightened-looking grey eyes.

After Jodrell's report, a police party was sent out, and they succeeded in capturing the woman. She appeared to be about 30 years old, and had a fierce and alert air, but other white women in the district.

The woman did not understand any English words, and spoke only the local Aboriginal dialect. It was assumed that in an effort she had learned a shreds of the coast country, and the natives had raised her and raised her.

When the woman was placed in an isolation in Cucktown she refused to eat, and died within four days. While she was there she kept crying and moaning in the Aboriginal tongue - probably asking for the other members of the tribe who had shown her kindness.

It was a crazy moment and I felt sorry inside, as I did as she said and I heard her close the door. I meant to ask her name and find out if she knew just where Lon had gone. But instead I found her against me and she was soft and warm, now pressing tight against me, her arms around my neck, pulling my face down.

"Why?" I managed.

Her terrible laugh again.

I looked into her eyes. Something burned there that shouldn't have.

She was kissing me. She knew how to kiss a man. Then she pulled back slightly.

"You can help me," she murmured.

It didn't sound right or even make sense. "How the hell can I help you? Why should I? I don't even know your name."

"Linda. And you can help me."

"How?"

"Get Big Lon off this damn

I struggled. "His brother, Tule? The animal songfest?"

She led me deeper into the house, into an untidy bedroom with half-expected furniture. We sat on the unmade double bed, side by side. I felt her warm hip next to me.

"Big Lon talks to me." Her fingers worked on the bottom of my shirt.

"So, he talks. Go on."

"He keeps saying the one word over and over. A name, Carmen Cheats."

"Who's Carmen Cheats?" I tried.

Her fingers moved to my face, caressing. "You're Ralph. Lon talked about a Ralph, the brother of Carmen Cheats. Can't be many Ralphs on the mountain. I say she's your sister."

"Maybe I am." It was silly to make a game out of it.

"Lon hurt her, didn't he? Like he hurt me and a lot of others. That's Lon."



THE BIGGEST THIEF IN THE WORLD

His shady dealing and trickery brought him a fantastic business empire — but when it was scrutinised, it burst like a bubble.

FACT / PAUL BROCK

INTO THE smoking room of the luxurious Atlantic liner strolled the man who for years had made a fine art of robbing bankers, swindling great bond-issuing houses, milking millionaires and even bankrupting governments. With a smug of faint disdain on his face he surveyed the glittering company, his deep-set eyes flickering coldly from face to face.

This man was Ivar Kruger, match-maker, multi-millionaire, colonial big-business robber-baron whose loot up to that date amounted to more than \$650 million, all amassed by working the oldest swindle in the capitalist system — that of robbing Peter to pay Paul.

Only in Kruger's case, when Peter had little left of which to be robbed, all Kruger had to do was retire to his study and there forge notes for millions of dollars. Until his downfall, these notes were honored by the Finance Ministers of practically every nation in the Western World.

On this night, on board a modern Atlantic liner which he could have bought outright without even noticing the slight reduction in his bank balance, he was at the peak of his wealth and power. Only the utmost wealth, the seductively beautiful, or the world-famous entered that lounge. And now all eyes, male and female, were turned towards Ivar Kruger as, pretending to be unaware of their interest, he drew out a gold cigarette case.

"Has anyone a match?" asked the man who ruled the match-making potential of the entire world.

There was a ripple of laughter. "No!" chorused a dozen voices, "but we've all got lighters!"

A dozen flames were held out to him. He selected that offered by a tall, blonde American girl, the most desirable (and naturally the most

expensive) situation on the boat. Kruger, whose factories had made a million matches during the war, he had been in the room, smiled and placed his arm around her shoulder. She sought his hand and squeezed it — a mute promise that would cost him \$10,000 that night.

Meanwhile the millionaires, the big businessmen, the Hollywood stars all watched him with undisguised wonder and admiration. Every one of them wished he had the riches which Ivar Kruger possessed. All the males present wished they could afford his partner, and all the females present called her smiling games under their breath and yearned to take her place.

Kruger merely smiled. He could afford to smile. Many years were to pass before the truth about him was to be known.

It came at last in 1934, when Kruger lay in his luxurious Paris apartment with a bullet in his head. And the truth was so incredible that for days the bankers, the financial experts, and even the little man of half a dozen squinters who had followed their financial leaders, refused to believe it. For this man had established a legend that his vast hoard of riches made him immortal. He was beyond the reach of death by the bullet. But only beyond the reach of a bullet fired by somebody else. Not all the money in the world, or all the men and either, could stop the great Ivar Kruger from pulling the trigger himself.

In Britain three of London's leading newspapers thought Kruger's death worthy of a full "leader", usually reserved only for Presidents and royalty. They spoke of him as the king of the financial geniuses of our time. Two famous economists praised him patently, and expressed the opinion that his wisdom had averted another World War.

Their faces must have turned a particularly vivid red when, as the weeks passed, investigation showed that Kruger was not only an unrepentant international financier of the worst type, but a thief, a forger, a homosexual and a rapist. Not only that, but — and this was quoted in all newspapers by a stand old London Newspaper — he tried to surreptitiously rob the collection box when it was passed to him in church on Sundays.

For years everybody had hailed Kruger as the greatest financial genius of all time. But when the chips were down they discovered that he was actually the biggest thief and forger who ever lived.

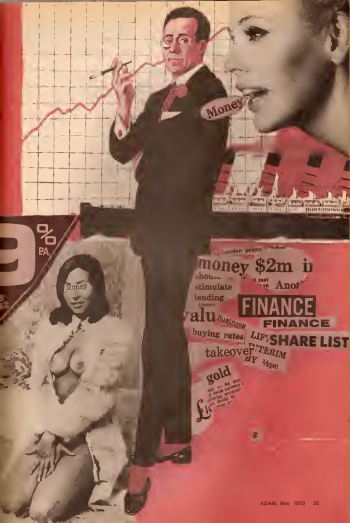
In one way or another Kruger took \$650 million out of the small investors of the world, using the accepted international financial system to do it. The investors were chiefly in France, the United States and Germany, but even Kruger's brother Sweden suffered to the tune of over \$30 million.

Kruger was born into a family that had been in the match industry for two generations, but it was not until after he had worked as an engineer in the US and elsewhere, and built up a substantial building business in Sweden that he turned once again to matches.

"Let us concentrate on a product that everybody uses," he said, "and one which is certain to be used in vast quantities a hundred years from now, in spite of any scientific developments which may take place in the field. Is there such a product? Yes — it is the match, which never goes out of fashion."

He put forward the idea of reorganising Sweden's match industry, with its many small factories, into one vast project.

(Continued on page 67)



Money

9%
PA.

Money

London prices

money \$2m in

show

stimulate

lending

London

Another

FINANCE

FINANCE

valu

buying rates

SHARE LIST

takeover

INTERIM

BY 1/2p

gold

£1

STRIP FOR ACTION

Steve Connel thought they'd missed their only chance of survival — until the German girl suddenly showed what she was made of.

FICTION / CARL ASCH

THE PLANE FELL like a shot-gunned pigeon.

Forced back into his seat by centrifugal force, Steve Connel was conscious of floating images, Eizena, the Israeli pilot, his arms writhing with muscle, his thin dark face snarling as he fought the controls. The girl, Ingrid, frozen in her seat, her shorts flipped back to show slender provocative thigh, her full, sensuous mouth half parted, her eyes narrowed.

Now, for the first time since Steve had met her, there was no seductive intent, none of the coarseness and gut-grabbing act she had been showing at him since he had boarded the plane in Athens.

Outside the cabin windows a nightmare landscape whirled about them. The Negro, the southern desert of Israel, bared its teeth as the crippled Connel fell towards it. Steve braced his lean six-foot frame as a saw-toothed mountain apparently snatched at a wing. Eizena yanked either in fear or fury. The girl said nothing.

The plane flattened suddenly into a swooping glide. A range of low hills slipped under the wheels. A jagged monolithic rock apparently tried to climb through the windshield, falling away only at the last second.

Steve felt a series of hammer blows near his kidneys. The ground leaped past his window, reached up and tore off one wing tip. Glass shattered and there was an arid clanging followed by a silence that was if anything louder.

They were down and alive.

Eizena's hands blurred across the dash. The sprayy brush bent and threw a small canvas satchel through the twisted door then threw himself after it. Over his shoulder he yelled.

"Out Five."

The girl was between Steve and the door. Locked in her own private dream of fear she showed no signs of

coming out of her catatonic freeze. Without thinking about it, Steve scooped her in front of him as he jumped, landed outside the plane with her full body crushed in his arms.

He landed with both feet running and they kept running. When he was 50 yards from the plane the fuel tank gulped and threw a blast of heat after him as it exploded. Fragments of fuselage whirled in the air and scattered into the sand around him.

At the foot of a shallow rise he stopped running, turned and glanced at the plane. The blue and white painted tail was the only part of the little Connel 180 not engulfed by flames.

In those flames was the 18000 tool-kit necessary to Steve's work as a trouble-shooting master mechanic for a world-famous drilling company. He had taken years to build that toolbox, and half the value by its tools he had designed and made himself, no machine could replace them.

His squat set feet was grim as he stared down at the wreck.

The girl moved against his chest, recalling him in other realities. He glanced down to find her heavy-lashed green eyes open and staring him speculatively. As she met his gaze she moved and stretched fluidly in his arms, prying her rounded breasts against his chest.

"Darling," she said, pantingly, "you're so strong."

"Amph," said Steve.

Unconsciously he dumped her into the pack strewn sand of the desert. His disbelieved and falling across her face, nose start riding up around her hips, almost transparent blouse torn in front, exposing deep cleavage and perfectly rounded breasts, she was a wary looking morsel indeed. But Steve was fixed and in no mood for being detached.

"What are you?" he asked, blaz-

ing. "Some kind of sex-maniac? You tried to seduce me from Athens to Cyprus. Cyprus to Lydda you tried the pilot till you found out he was married and liked it. Later on you tried me again till you found out I wasn't playing. Then you seduced for a while. Now we've had a nice little plane crash to water you up a little and you're on again."

She pointed at him and rubbed slowly at her hip. Her voice was low, almost harshly pitched and her German-accented English gave it a catlike sss-prrr.

"You can't blame a girl for trying," she said. "You're an attractive man and I like Americans."

"I'm an Australian," Steve said impatiently. "Honey, I love you too but, one, I'm not a tourist and when we get to Lydda I am going out in the desert to play tomorrow to a sick drilling rig. Two, we are down in the sand and lonely desert and have a long walk ahead of us."

She was digesting this when Eizena came out-footing up the slope behind them. The hatch was still carrying the canvas satchel he had thrown out of the plane on crashing. Under his right arm was tucked the stubby, efficient shape of an Iliad sub-machine gun. He approached in silence to hear the end of Steve's outburst, and although he glanced the gun was brief and did not touch his eyes.

"Even that is simpler than the true situation, Mr. Connel," he said. "To walk out is not a problem. There is a road about 30 kilometres West and I have enough water to last us two days with ease. If we stay by the wreck we could be picked up even sooner. I am still on the Lydda skywatch. And our military order will have had us plotted."

"So there's nothing to worry about," said the girl. She began to brush sand away from her fawn skirt, posturing prettily with one foot





"This is the busy blande I used to go with."

looked as she did so. Her green eyes watched Steve obliquely for his reaction.

Oh, well, thought Steve, took-it-goes, assignment shot. He could sit in Fiat for weeks waiting for new instruments that would positively not be available on a drilling rig. From a previous trip some three years before he knew that Israel's Red Sea port had some of the best night clubs in the world. And he added, mentally, gleaming at legend, the hotels all had bedrooms. He smiled at her and Elton.

"So let's sit and wait," he said. "I hate walking in the heat."

Elton stared at them both warily. His then, dark face was gone.

"Why do you think we crashed?" he asked harshly. "Engine failure? This is... was my plane. There are no mistakes in servicing my plane. If there is anything doubtful I do not take off. I am a civil pilot not a fighter pilot — I do not take risks."

"What are you trying to say?" Steve demanded.

"I am saying we were shot down." He roared curiously as they both stared at him. "By a heavy machine gun I would judge. Probably a 12.7 mm. We are inside Israeli territory by 20 miles so it was not fired from over

the borders. This leaves only one alternative."

"Fedayeen," Steve said slowly.

The Israeli nodded. "I see you know what Fedayeen are, Mr. Cornell."

"Well, I don't," the girl broke in, suddenly shrill. "What are you talking about? What are Fedayeen

and what have they got to do with us?"

"They're terrorists," Steve told her. "Bandits from the Arab countries into Israel. They come in to sabotage and kill. Or didn't you know there was war on?"

"Usually they are not so brave," Elton said. "They do not penetrate very deeply and they do not move by day. I judge that these are infiltrators who have been intercepted, cut off from their escape route and are being pursued by our army. They probably thought that we were looking for them and that is why they fired on us."

The girl's face turned slowly from one man to the other. For the first time her expression was not a deliberately adopted one and Steve thought with astonishment that she was in fact one of the oddest things he had ever seen — when she stopped trying to be cute.

"I don't understand," she said. "What has your war got to do with me? I am a German citizen. Steve, you are Australian. Only *Mex* Elton is in any danger if they should come here. And he could hide. We will say we were alone. It is very simple."

Elton looked at Steve helplessly, then spread his hands and shrugged. From the car's hold-all he took out a pair of binoculars and a bolt-action revolver. He slung the binoculars round his neck and handed the gun to Steve.

"I hope you can use this," he said. "I also hope you can explain to this young lady because I get up. I am going to have a look round."

He went on up to the crest of the



"I thought we agreed on a small, quiet wedding!"

The start of Australian cricket

THE FIRST RECORDED game of cricket in Australia was played in Sydney in 1833 — 12 years after the start of the first settlement. It was already a widely-played sport in England.

In the next 50 years or so, the rules of cricket crystallised. The first representative match between Australian colonies took place on 1836, when a representative team from New South Wales played one from Victoria.

An earlier match, however, had been played in 1831 between a team from Van Diemen's Land — later Tasmania — and Port Phillip Settlement. But this match was played in February, and Port Phillip did not become the separate colony of Victoria until July, 1851.

The first English team to visit Australia arrived in 1863, and seven years later a team of Aboriginal cricketers — including such names as Twooowerry and Duke's Dock — played in England.

The first Sheffield Shield season was that of 1892-3, when Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia took part. The first Test Match between England and Australia was played in 1877 at Melbourne.

edge with an easy lying stride, dropped flat at the crest and began to search the desert in slow methodical sweeps of the binoculars.

The revolver was an old British Webley .38. There were five rounds in the cylinder and six in bags on the outside of the holster. Steve filled the empty chamber and put the five spare rounds in his pocket. The girl watched him incredulously.

"Do you seriously mean to use that?" she demanded. "In a war that has nothing to do with you? Are you crazy?"

Steve sighed. She was really a very pretty girl, he decided. She couldn't really be that dumb.

"Look," he said. "I've met these hellspawn boys before. They are not soldiers. They are terrorists — killers. They fear women, children and old men as targets. They're night crawlers and assassins. Sure this ain't our war but how do you expect to explain it to them? They're Arabs. If you were lucky enough to find one who speaks English or German, if you were fortunate enough to get him to listen to you before shooting you, if you could convince him that you were not English or German-speaking heathens . . ."

"I have a German passport."

"Supposing he can read German — where is your passport?"

Ingrid's hands flew to her face and she stared past him at the smouldering wreck of the plane. Her eyes dilated and filled with terror.

"They would not shoot a woman," she said.

"Maybe not right away," Steve said. "You might wish they had."

He'd said too much. The green eyes glared over with shock, the full mouth became loose and trembled. Her hands trembled and clutched at her throat. Whispering bubbling

sounds came from her lips. Even in disintegration she was pretty.

Steve smacked her hard across the face with the back of his right hand. A loud wet spring up on her cheek and blood trickled slowly from the corner of her mouth. A small pink tongue came out to lick it and the glazed terror left her eyes. Aggravatingly, she shivered a waxy glance at him and smiled slowly.

"Hmmm," she said. "I love beautiful men."

Involuntarily Steve laughed. His tension showed in the way that he laughed, full-throated, a little too long. Ingrid looked at him nervously and with an effort he stopped laughing. He reached out and put one arm around her smooth shoulders.

"You're a beast, Ingrid. Just do as you're told and I'll treat you to the best hotel room in Elbit and the finest dinner in town."

"Beastie," she said.

"You're a big eater?"

"The room, fool."

Elbit came down the slope, running.

"They are coming," he said. "A Toyota command car with a heavy machine gun. Five, maybe six men. Do you understand?"

He looked at the sudden fear in the girl's face and nodded.

"Good. Now that is what we must do."

Steve lay in the smut cover of the camel-thorn scrub and watched the command car growing up the slope towards him.

(Continued on page 81)



"For \$425 I got 14 days in Europe, a car and a French brand named Colette."



AUSTRALIA'S FIRST WAR FLYERS

While the ANZAC divisions were fighting on Gallipoli, four Australian pilots in outdated aircraft were fighting a pioneer air war in the Mesopotamian desert.

FACT / MICHAEL YOUNG

THE GENERAL STAFF of the Indian Army Expeditionary Force would have been hard put to choose a more unpleasant site for the makeshift airfield. It was located in the middle of a material swamp, at the end of a crude road of date-palm logs. The officers and men stationed there lived in tents, and shared their small area of rammed dry ground with an old Arab secretary. In the middle of the day the temperature rose to more than 120 degrees.

But there was no time to complain about the scenery. The Australian pilot officers and ground crews spent their first few days at the field in assembling and testing their aircraft, getting ready for action.

Then, on May 31, 1915, in the early daylight hours before the blistering sun heated and roasted the air, the first machine was wheeled

out ready for a patrol. The Renault engine popped and spluttered into life, and the little biplane — a thing of stretched fabric, banded struts and stiff light wires — trundled out on to the runway, turned into the wind and staggered off the ground in a swirl of dust.

The handful of officers and men who watched from the side of the runway with their eyes narrowed against the dust and sunlight knew that they had just seen history made. They were mostly Australians belonging to the Mesopotamian Field Flight of the Australian Flying Corps, and the Maurice Farman Shortform which had just left the ground was about to make the first Australian operational flight of World War I — and the first in history.

Those were the years of first flights. It was less than 12 years since

the Wright brothers' biplane had first clawed its way into the air for man's first powered flight. Less than four years since an Indian aircraft in North Africa made the first war flight by a powered machine. And the Australian Flying Corps itself had been in existence for less than three years.

The first suggestion for military aviation in Australia had come in 1909, when the Commonwealth offered a \$10,000 prize to the daughter of a successful "flying machine for military purposes". About 40 inventors entered the competition, but not one was successful.

Nonetheless, in December, 1910, the Military Board reviewed a proposal for a flying corps to support the army, and two years later a note for a flying school was chosen, aircraft were brought overseas, and



LEFT
One of the Half Flight's Maurice Farmen Shortboms being towed into the wind for a take-off

ABOVE
In Mesopotamia, aviation was a dangerous business even on the ground. These three Shortboms were damaged when the Shemal slipped them from their moorings

BELOW
Re-supply from the air, 1916 style. This BEC is loaded with grain for the beleaguered Kut garrison. Some of the bags can be seen hanging under the outrails behind the wheels.



pilots and mechanics were taken on strength. On September 20, 1912, the new corps came into existence.

Six weeks before that, a civilian pilot, Mr H. A. Petre, became Australia's first military aviator when he was posted to the Aviation Instruction Staff as an honorary lieutenant. Ten days later Mr H. A. Harman was engaged as the school's second instructor with the same rank. And general recruitment for the new corps began on January 1, 1913.

The first pilots to be trained at the Central Flying School, Point Cook, were the first ones to be called

The four pilots of the Australian Flying Corps' Half Flight (Left to right) Treloar, White, Petre and Moss. In front, an Arab servant



for active service when World War I began less than two years later. An expeditionary force was sent from Australia in August, 1914, to seize German New Guinea, and Lieutenant Harman was sent to fly in reconnaissance with Lieutenant G. F. Hertz as his second pilot.

The other pilots joined Harman and Hertz when they left, but there was little fighting in New Guinea and their aircraft were not even taken out of their crates. Then, soon after they returned in disappointment to Australia, a second chance for action appeared.

This time it was a request from farther afield. The Government of

the grand ocean were issued with their first uniforms. Two days later — five days before the Austen steamed ashore at Gallipoli — they sailed for the Persian Gulf.

In May, 1915, the Australian flyers had their first glimpse of the tall date-palms and square white buildings of Mesopotamia shimmering in the desert heat. Doped with quinine, they landed in this Arabian 'Nighth' setting to take charge of their aircraft.

So far, the Mesopotamian campaign had gone well for the Indian Army. A quick attack at the outset had led to the capture of the town of Basra, securing the Anglo-Persian Oil

exporter chosen. The Funnies were quite unsuitable for any sort of active war service, let alone a war far from home in the baking heat of Mesopotamia. They were not fitted to carry guns or bombs, and in that climate their already feeble performance fell off even more.

But they were all that were available, and Captain Petre knew he would have to make the best of them. Petre was an quiet, intelligent Englishman who had been a barrister in London before emigrating to Melbourne. He had learned to fly at Brooklands, one of the centers of aviation in Britain, and in Australia he had shown himself to be a thorough and efficient officer. Now, on active service for the first time, his qualities were to be exercised to the full.

Within five days of landing, the Australians had all three Funnies crashed, overhauled and rigged, and Petre made a short test flight in each. Then, on the morning of May 31, General Townshend's advance up the flooded Tigris began — and Petre, with a New Zealand officer, Lieutenant W. W. A. Burn, in his observant, took off on the APC's first mission.

In the days of battle which followed, Petre and his pilots and observers proved that even the slow and clumsy Funnies were capable of bringing back valuable intelligence. On the first day Petre and Burn spotted new Turkish defenses in front of the Indian troops moving up in small boats from hill to hill along the flooded river valley. And on the second day Captain White, acting as an observer for Major H. L. Reilly, an Indian Army pilot, did even better.

White and Reilly took off from Basra in a Shorthorn fitted with dual controls, and struggled through the fierce northerly "ghamal" wind to the battle area. After taking two hours to cover about 60 miles they reached the town of Bahran, where they saw that the Turks were already in retreat. Miles of the defenses along the river were deserted and vulnerable.

The airmen dropped three small bombs on the Turks, swooping low through an alarmed multitude of rifle-fire. One bomb narrowly missed a bunch full of fleeing soldiers, who promptly ran their horses ashore and surrendered. By then the Shorthorn, with the wind behind it, was fluttering back south along the river.

Shortly afterwards the crew of the little portcote HMS Comet was surprised to see the biplane materialize and come in low overhead as if on a bombing run.

(Continued on page 68)

Trains on the old canefields

MODERN CANE farmers in Queensland have fine horses and cars — but there was a time not too long ago when they had neither. Some, indeed, hardly had respectable roads to their farms.

In those days, when the cane was being cut, you would see the women of back-blacks canoes riding to town in the little black steam trams hauling loads of cane to the mill.

These trains went up the line in the early morning, delivering empty coaches for the canoes to load. Towards noon the load-men collected the filled trunks and made for town, with the ladies riding with them on "the engine".

On their arrival in town, the women had about two hours of shopping time before "the engine" went out again with more sugar.

If the heat and canoes caused discomfort, they never mentioned it.

India had launched a campaign in Turkish-occupied Mesopotamia at the end of the Persian Gulf, aimed at capturing Baghdad and protecting the region's valuable oilfields. They, too, needed planes for reconnaissance and reconnaissance.

The Indian Army had no aircraft of its own. Its staff asked Britain for support, but all the Royal Flying Corps' resources were committed to the vital battles in France. However, the Maharajah of Gwalior patriotically provided the money to buy two modern aircraft, and the Australian Government cabled that it would provide pilots and mechanics to operate them.

Petre, now a captain, was placed in command of this modest unit, designated a "half flight." He had Lieutenants Moss, Captain T. W. White, and Lieutenant W. H. Treloar as pilots, and about 40 mechanics and other ground staff — some of whom had been very handsily recruited. A few had never even seen an airplane, let alone serviced one.

Australia sent the promise of aid in February, 1915, and the men of the Half Flight were ready to leave two months later. On April 18, 1915,

Company's vital pipeline and the Royal Navy's supply of fuel supplies. Now the commander in the field, Major-General C. V. F. Townshend, was getting ready to advance inland up the Tigris and Euphrates rivers against the Turkish armies.

The APC Half Flight landed just in time to take part in this operation. They found that a small airfield had already been made in the swamp by the Arab gawwads, and a small party of Indian Army officers and mechanics were waiting for them. They were equipped with two repair-shop lorries, with horses and mules for mule transport. All this was satisfactory.

When Captain Petre inspected the aircraft which had been supplied for his little force, however, he was not so satisfied. There were three — two Maurice Farman Shortorns, primitive two-seater pusher-engined biplanes which were really fit only for training, and an even older and less seaworthy Maurice Farman Leathorn which had already seen considerable service in Egypt.

It was a pity the "modern machines" paid for by the benevolent Maharajah had not been more





THE UNSAFE SAFE

The safe was empty until the diamonds were locked inside. When it was opened again, it was empty again. How?

FICTION / PETER SINCLAIR

"I HAVE NO INTENTION of spending one cent of my masterly pension for the benefit of a lazy and incompetent police force. If you and Inspector O'Hare wish to pick my brains once more the least you can do is to provide the necessary transport, making you seem to think it so desirable that I should attend at the scene of the crime because somebody-or-other is confined to a wheelchair."

Hodgkins was amiable. He stood for a moment, listening, the receiver pressed to his ear. Behind him his daughter, Eileen Burke, crowsheeped anxiously.

"All right, Donald. I'll be ready to leave in five minutes," Hodgkins said and put the receiver down.

"Damned impudence," he said. "Wanted me to catch a taxi over (damned) impudence, that's what it is. Wanted me to spend my own money to help them solve one of their pecking cranes. And why ever I have to travel right across town and actually interview the people involved."

"I'm sure Donald wouldn't ask if he didn't think it was absolutely necessary," said Eileen.

"Why should it be necessary. It's probably some perfectly trifling matter. He mentioned something about valuable stolen from a safe. If our police force is not adequate to deal with petty larceny—really."

"Now sit down, father, and have a cup of tea."

"I'll have to be quick. They've sent a police car for me and it will be here any moment."

Hodgkins had just put down his empty cup when the car's horn sounded outside.

"Monsters!" he exploded. "They just sat out the front and blew the horn. At least they could come to the door."

"Now, father, I think it's very nice of them to send the car over at all."

"It was either that or I wasn't going."

"Please, father, this time do you think you could work things out so that Donald might be given a bit of the credit? I'm sure it would mean a lot to him. I think he's been getting rather demoralized lately, what with you helping all the time."

"I offer advice only when it's sought," Hodgkins said, a little put out.

"Oh, I know that, dad. I'm sure Donald really appreciates the help you've given him, but it would be nice if just this once you sort of—well, prodded him in the right direction. You know what I mean."

"I know what you mean, dear," Hodgkins said, softening.

The car horn sounded a long blast. "Damned impudence," he muttered as he slammed the front door behind him.

Inspector O'Hare made the introductions. "This is Mr. Hodgkins, whom I mentioned to you earlier. Mr. Hodgkins, this is Mr. Curtis. Mr. Curtis seems to have been robbed of a diamond necklace."

"Seems to have been robbed?" What do you mean "seems?" de-

manded Hodgkins. "Well, Curtis, have you been robbed or haven't you?"

"Of course I've been robbed," said Curtis, wheeling his chair forward across Detective Constable Donald Burke's feet. He held his breath and said nothing.

Curtis went on. "The necklace vanished from the safe. I saw it put in there a week ago and locked the safe myself. I opened it this morning and the necklace was gone. Of course I've been robbed. The Inspector and this person"—a bony finger thrust towards Donald—"seem to think the necklace is merely mislaid."

"Perhaps you'd better tell Mr. Hodgkins exactly what happened, just as you told it to Constable Burke and myself," the Inspector said. "Now, I've already explained to you that Mr. Hodgkins is not a policeman, but an unofficial adviser."

"Honorary unofficial adviser," put in Hodgkins.

"Who has offered us useful advice on occasions in the past," the Inspector continued. "Of course it is quite possible that he may not be able to help at all on this occasion."

"Quite possible," said Donald. "If Mr. Curtis could be allowed to put on with his story, we might all find out soon enough who was going to be of any help," said Hodgkins.

Curtis began. "About two months ago a wealthy aunt died in the United States and left me a diamond necklace. It was a very good necklace and when it was delivered—you can see that I'm in no condition to travel about much—I immediately called on a representative of a very respect-

ADJUSTMENTS



LAURENCE

"What's wrong with them may I ask?"

able house of jewels and asked for a valuation for insurance purposes. The man placed a valuation of \$50,000 on the necklace and I insured it for that amount.

"The insurance company and I would have to keep it in a bank vault or a private safe if they were to accept the risk. Well, I'm one of those people who believe that beautiful things — and this necklace is beautiful — should not be hidden away in a bank vault and covered. I told them I would have a private safe installed in the house, which I did. I wrote away to a safe manufacturing company for literature about their products and in due course I had the safe fitted in the lounge room wall — as you see."

Curtis indicated the safe. Its door stood half open, showing a completely empty interior. "Until the safe was installed I kept the necklace in a bank vault and the insurance cover would not have been effective. As soon as the safe was installed I transferred the necklace into it. I'm a widower — my wife was killed three years ago in the same accident that left me the way I am — and I have a 20-year-old daughter who enjoys wearing the necklace to suitable functions. She's been overseas for the past month and so the necklace hasn't been much in use lately. However, I have taken it out of the safe each Sunday since she sailed, just to look at it."

"Pardon me interrupting, Mr

Curtis," said Hodgkin, "but when you say I have taken it out of the safe . . . you do not mean that you removed it personally from the safe. From where you are sitting it seems to me that the safe would be too high for you to reach inside it without some difficulty."

"Quite so, Mr Hodgkin," said Curtis. "When I say I took it out of the safe I mean that my man, Manners, took it out for me."

"Manners, I take it, is a butler?"
"Not so much a butler as a general helper. You see, a man in my condition . . ."

"Of course. I see that you would be in need of physical assistance from time to time," said Hodgkin. "Please proceed with the story."

"Last Sunday I — or rather Manners — put the diamonds in the safe as usual and this morning, when the safe was opened, they had gone. That's all there is to it."

"You will have to provide more information than that if anyone is going to be of assistance to you," said Hodgkin.

"But that's all. That's the whole story," Curtis insisted.

"Details, Mr Curtis, details. Did you keep the necklace in a box?" Hodgkin asked.

"Yes. In a metal strong-box. I had the only key."

"And how big was the strong-box?"

"Really, I'm sure Manners could answer that sort of question much better than I."

"I don't want to hear from Manners at the moment," said Hodgkin. "I want to hear your impression of it. How big was the box?"

"Well, it was about six inches long, two inches wide and about one inch deep."

"Good. Now, when you handed the box to Manners last Sunday . . ."

"Wait a moment," Curtis interrupted. "You and you wanted details and details you shall have. I did not hand the box to Manners directly, I



"You'd never catch me going to any of those wife-snapping parties — I'd probably have to give odds."

Para grass — a benefit and a menace

EVERY GARDENER knows that common couch grass is very tenacious of life, but a much larger number of the same family grows along creeks and rivers in eastern Australia.

Para grass, as it is called, is not native to Australia. It was introduced from South America as a good cattle forage grass, as Australia was looking for good natural grasses.

The runners of the para couch grass grow up to 100 yards long, often stretching out over deep pools and throwing up shoots about five feet high. However, farmers try to prevent the couch growing into streams and dams as watering stock have been known to get hopelessly tangled in the tough stems and drown when they become exhausted.

placed it on a tray he was carrying."

"Why the tray?" Hodgkins asked.

"It was just something he had made. He's quite a handy-man. It had become a joke between the two of us, this little ceremony of taking the diamonds out each Sunday and putting them away again. It was a small tray made from a left-over piece of stainless steel he found. He made two trays, as a matter of fact. I think he uses the other one in the kitchen."

"This tray that he used to carry the diamond box — was it deep enough to contain a secret compartment or anything like that?" Burke asked.

Hodgkins shuddered.

"No, Constable Burke," Curtis said frostily. "It was made from a thin piece of steel about one-eighth of an inch thick."

"Oh," said Donald Burke.

"Now, Mr Curtis, you placed the diamond box on the tray," said Hodgkins. "That was last Sunday. Was that the first time the tray had been used?"

"Yes, because Manning made it during the previous week."

"Then he earned the tray to the safe?"

"Yes," said Curtis. "He placed the tray with the box on it into the safe — making a production of showing how carefully it fitted — took the box off the tray, took out the tray and put the box down on the bottom of the safe."

"Pardon me interrupting again," said Hodgkins, "but I doubt very much if you could have seen or such detail everything that happened inside the safe. The safe is at least five feet six inches from the floor and you sit only about three feet six from the floor, so to see into the safe you would have had to be quite some distance away — say 10 feet or more."

"After I placed the box on the tray I whacked myself across the

room, following Manning, and stopped beside him at the safe. Then I gave him the key. He opened the safe and returned the key to me. Then he slid the tray into the safe and I could tell from the movement of his arms — and I could see his arms right down to the elbows — that he lifted

the box off the tray, lifted the tray up, drew it back out of the safe, and put down the box inside the safe. Then with a kind of pushing motion he moved the box to the back of the safe."

"One thing I'm quite certain of and that is that the box went into the safe on that tray. When the tray came out there was no box on it, nor was there any box in his hands when they came out. There's no doubt about it — he put the box away. I then closed the safe, reached up and looked it and set the burglar alarm."

"Manning knew about the burglar alarm?" Hodgkins asked.

"Yes, but he had no way of turning it off except with a key which has been in my possession all week. I turned it off immediately before I opened the safe this morning and the man who fitted the alarm has inspected it since. He was quite adamant that the alarm has not been interfered with in any way. Yet when



"I hate to be a wet blanket, but there's been another shipwreck."

Manners opened the safe this morning the box and the diamonds were gone."

"Surely it's possible," Manners copied the key to the alarm and to the safe?" Hodgkins said.

"I suppose making it impossible," said Curtis, "but I really don't see how he could have. By day and night both keys are on a chain around my neck. I'm a very light sleeper and I lock my bedroom door each night."

"I think we can rule that out, then," said Hodgkins.

"You can rule it out if you want," said the Inspector. "So far as I can see, duplicates must have been used to steal the diamonds. Anyway, that's my theory. Once you rule out the use of duplicate keys you're left with an impossible situation where the diamonds are placed in the safe, the safe is locked and next time it is opened, although it has not been tampered with in any way, the diamonds are gone."

Hodgkins brushed the subject aside. "I would like to see the tray Manners made for carrying the diamond box, and also the tray he made for use in the kitchen."

"Certainly," said Curtis. "The tray he used to carry the box is there on the mantelpiece and the other tray is usually kept on top of the refrigerator. Certainly, if you would be so kind as to fetch it!"

Burke went to the kitchen and returned holding a small steel tray. Hodgkins examined both trays and made quick sketches of them, noting the measurements.

"These are extremely interesting," Hodgkins said.

"They look pretty ordinary to me," said Inspector O'Hara.

"They are certainly of rather plain design - very plain indeed. What is interesting about them is their



"This is Ellen and me when I was two years older than her; this is Ellen and me five years later when I was four years older than her; this is Ellen and me . . ."

dimensions. See how the one with the overhanging lip fits neatly into the other. That's not coincidence. There's some very fine workmanship involved in that." He turned to Curtis. "Manners opened the safe this morning - right?"

"Yes. There's only the two of us living here at present."

"When he saw the diamond box wasn't there what did he say?"

"He just said - 'My God, it's gone!'"

"And you said -?"

"I said 'No sense, it can't be gone. You put it away yourself last Sunday.' And he said, 'Well, have a

look for yourself', and took me under the arms and lifted me up out of the chair until I could see into the safe. The safe was completely empty."

"Was that the first time you have ever seen right into the safe?" Hodgkins asked.

"Yes. I'd never seen right to the back before."

"And when Manners put you down what did you do next?"

"I went straight to the telephone and rang the police."

Hodgkins looked around the room. "The telephone isn't in here. Where is it?"

"It's in the hall."

"And how long were you on the telephone?"

"Only a couple of minutes. I came straight back in here."

"And where was Manners while you were ringing up?"

"He was in here," said Curtis. "I told him to stay here while I was gone. I thought it would be best if someone was here all the time until the police came."

Hodgkins interrupted. "Is Manners handy?"

"Yes. Do you want to speak to him?"

"No. I want to search his room."

Curtis was horrified. "Really, Mr. Hodgkins, I cannot permit that."

"Then so far as I'm concerned the investigation is closed," said Hodgkins, getting to his feet.

That strange bird the pelican

POSSIBLY THE MOST widespread of Australia's large birds is the big white pelican, which lives along most of the Australian coastline, up the big inland rivers and on the lakes. It is also found in Indonesia and New Guinea, and occasionally in New Zealand.

Pelicans usually live in small flocks along the shorelines, especially near mud-flats and sand-flats. Their grey and white plumage and long, pointed, yellow bills make them very distinctive.

Pelicans are seldom seen in the air, although in spite of their rather clumsy appearance they are very good flyers. They are most often heard fishing in shallow water, or at rest at the edge of the land.

Their diet consists mainly of ash water and fresh water shellfish, and they are fine fishermen on the water. The pouch on a pelican's bill enables it to store food without swallowing it while it dives for more, and in this way it can make continuous raids on the same school of fish.

Pelicans build their nests in deep-pocked colonies, occupying a shallow hole in the ground and surrounding it with dead plants, grass and sticks. The female lays two or three large, yellowish-white eggs each breeding season.

"But surely you don't think Manners."

"Mr. Curtis," said Hodgkins importantly, "if your Mr. Manners didn't steal the diamonds then they are not stolen — which they obviously are."

"Very well," said Curtis, "if you feel it is necessary to search Manners' room you may do so, but if he gives notice I shall be most displeased."

"I shouldn't be at all surprised if he does give notice. No doubt he is looking for some reasonable excuse to leave without arousing suspicion."

"Really, this is most arduous," Curtis said. "I think you should at least talk to the man first."

"It's not necessary, believe me," said Burke. "Burke, would you accompany me while I search Manners' room?"

Burke and Hodgkins were back within five minutes.

"Well, did you find anything?" asked the Inspector.

"We didn't find the diamonds," said Burke, "but we found all the evidence we need to put Manners behind bars. It wasn't done with keys after all, Inspector. It was done with trays."

"Trays?" barked Curtis.

"Trays," Burke insisted. He picked up a small book from Curtis' desk. "I'll show you exactly how it was done. Imagine this book is the diamond strong box. First of all I put one tray inside the other, thus, with the lipped tray on which the diamond box was placed inside the



"I've selected you for this job, Detective, because I happened to push the wrong button."

one used in the kitchen. They fit together so perfectly and the lip damages the side of the second tray so well if you were not told there were two trays you would certainly think there was only one.

"Now, put the book on the tray. That's right. Now I carry the tray

with the book on it over to the safe. You follow me. Now give me the key to open the safe — but since it's already open we can dispense with that, because it wasn't important so far as the actual theft was concerned."

"Now, I place the tray — or as we now know, the trays — into the safe, the lined sides of the lower tray to the sides of the safe. See how perfectly it fits — so perfectly that I have to tip the trays at a slight angle to fit them in. A really beautiful job, but then it had to be. Now, Mr. Curtis, from where you are sitting, and judging from the movements of my arms, tell me what I am doing inside the safe."

Curtis watched carefully. "Now you are putting the tray down on the bottom of the safe."

"That's right," said Donald.

"Now you're lifting the book off the tray. Out comes the tray with nothing on it and now you're putting the book down and pushing it to the back of the safe."

"Quite right in almost every detail," said Donald. "You saw the book go in on the tray. You saw the tray come out minus the book and you saw my hands come out holding only the tray. So the book must be still in the safe. Right?"

"Right," said Curtis.

"Wrong," said Burke. "The book is not there. Would you like to take a look?"



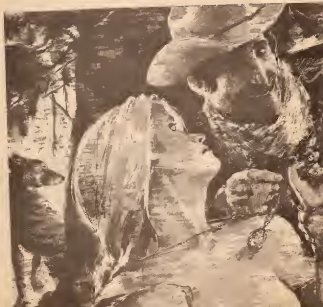
"Say, this isn't room 309."

(Continued on page 80)

ASHES OF VENGEANCE

Kimbers' cabin had been burned down while the sheriff had him in the jail, and his young wife was missing. Kimbers was going to make the sheriff pay . . .

FICTION / WADE B. RUBOTTOM



NUMBED BY TRAGEDY and night-cold, Gil Kambars was returning to Sundown. With his sorrow's hope down the steep trail, his 24-year-old frame swayed like a wind-whipped tree in slow motion.

As soon as he'd got out of jail, he had headed for his Lost Canyon Ranch. The seat on the back and right side of his scalp itched, always itched when he thought of Joe Durston. And fear of what Durston would do to John hurried him home.

At sight of the red glow in the sky, fear almost choked him. Before he arrived, the glow had died. When he arrived, the smouldering black ruins of his ranch house stunned him. Fumes unanswered calls and wench convinced him that his wife John had turned to death.

Grief at the ruins of all he loved didn't replace any of his hatred of Joe Durston. There was no forgiving his vicious crime, or the sheriff's giving him time to commit it.

Vengeance sprung Gil back into

his saddle. Under a lowering harvest moon, he headed for Sundown with a grief-gorged heart and a honed desire to kill Sheriff By Marshall.

Gil could feel John's face-blocked damage in his reeler pocket riding against his side. It was another galling reminder.

When he had given John that damage, her brown eyes went wide. "Gil, I don't need this. I wouldn't use it if I did."

"John, listen to me. Just keep it handy whenever I'm away."

She smiled sadly. "Killing, even in self-defense, is at best a human weakness. The instinct—"

"Use it as a human strength."

She heeded his advice, "The instinct to survive is an animal trait. And revenge is a pact with the Devil."

Gil pulled her skin from to him. The top of her honey blonde hair came no higher than his shirt pocket. Finally he got her to promise never to be without it when he was away.

And tonight, he had found it among the ruins of their home, near the smouldering trunk of the fallen pine tree that had towered over it. And on hoof-out earth, safe from the fire, he found the gold chain and locked that he had never seen his wife without. The chain's broken clasp was a galling reminder of Joe Durston's lust for gold — and evidence of his other lust.

He adjusted the ride of his low-crowned Stetson on his red hair and rubbed the side of his green eyes. One trip across Ridge Trail was enough to ask of any horse, but he had mountain-goated Quivers across twice tonight. She must be close-out and bruised. This was a trail in name only, but it was the shortest route between Sundown and Lost Canyon Ranch.

Now at the main road, Gil patted Quivers to a walk, let her stretch her neck. He used strutting stiffness from his own shoulders and flexing his wrist and finger joints. Grief-



crossed and cold, he felt lightheaded, drunk. He was in no condition to face the sheriff of Sandown.

Again he repeated his vow, made at the smouldering black ruins of all he loved: "I'll never rest until I see Joe Durston dead. But she sheriff goes first."

He opened Quinra to jag waters cold from them both and to cover the remaining mile and a half.

Only Gil Kimbarn's deep need for revenge kept him from breaking down with misery. He and Julie had been happy. Two years ago, seven months after his father's death, he had entered the new schoolroom from Schenectady over the threshold of his father's one-room shack at Lost Canyon Ranch.

They'd made plans and set about them. They built, painted, well-papered and furnished. By last Spring they had converted the one-room shack to a fine four-room ranch house.

He could never go back there. Not even to thoroughly search the black ruins for his wife's remains.

Besides, he had no time for that. Hated Joe Durston flamed in his heart. Yet in a way, he himself was to blame. If he had listened to Julie, this might not have happened.

For four years he had backed the fire of his hatred for Durston. It was the remains of their prospecting partnership Gil had been 20 at the



"He's right, Sarge. There's nothing in the bush about picking trees."

time. For two and a half years, Julie had tried to help him forget revenge.

He knew now there was only one way to ease revenge from his heart — satisfy it. That time there'd be no forgetting. This time, he wouldn't have Julie's help. She had told him that revenge is better and wicked. But

Julie didn't know — school teachers don't know everything. She'd never know that revenge is sweet. He scratched his scalp-itch.

She had almost made him forget Joe Durston. Then yesterday afternoon he'd seen Durston's dog, Wolf. Fundamentally, master and dog were alike. Both were quick tempered and quick to show it. But each showed it in his own way.

Hot-tempered Joe Durston was soft spoken and always cool when a fight got serious. Wolf expressed his temper with a low snarl and a flash of teeth. The sight of him asleep, near the Foke O'Gold Saloon's hatching rail, had sent Gil inside.

The sight of Joe Durston at the bar with his head tilted back and a whisky glass to his lips revived Gil's ache for revenge. Joe had prospered since Gil had last seen him. He was drenched up from black embossed boots to white Stetson. A morse-gummed J.D. on his shirt pocket and yellow neckerchief hinted at self-love. From Gil's point of view there was something wrong with his outfit. He didn't take time to puzzle it out.

With the bat wing down and flapping behind him, Gil called, "Joe Durston!"

Joe set his whisky glass down. He pivoted his lanky frame. His arms bowed at his sides, his hands gunsteady. The pale hostile eyes in his whiskey-red face showed no recognition. Then he relaxed and pushed back his hat.

"I'm not around, boy." His voice



"We were parked in a lovely lane and I had to slap him six times. He kept shaking off!"

was low, soothing — as if to a child
"You can see for yourself!"

That's what was wrong with his
oufit. His gunbelt was missing.

"I see," Gil said, aware of men
shuffling out of range, "but did it
matter to you that I wasn't armed
the—" Gil hated himself for not
being cool as Durston, for the
muzzled pounding of his heart
— the day you used a shovel on my
head?"

"That was an accident," Joe said
calmly. "The shovel fell on you."

"It was an accident that you
didn't kill me."

"Glad that I didn't, boy," Joe
chuckled deeply. "It gave me some-
thing to look forward to."

Gil took a deep breath. Suddenly
half of him wanted to back through
the burning doors — forget this, as
John so often had asked him to. But
the other half of him wanted to see
Joe Durston die — as soon as he was
armed. He didn't have time to resolve
his two wants.

He felt the gun barrel against his
back. He recognized the voice.
Slowly, he obeyed the command —
his hands went over his head. Slowly,
he turned around and looked into
the stark face behind the longhorn
mountain. He saw the broad chest
providing ample space for the silver
sheriff's star.

"Kumbaya!" There was nothing
newborn about the sheriff or his
voice, but his words were new and to
the point. "In Sandown, you check
your gun with me." When he had
Gil's gunbelt, holsters and 45 mks in
his left hand, he added, "You'll cool
in jail while Durston gets out of
town."

The sheriff had had no right to jail
Gil that afternoon. Because he had,
his time was running out. Now in a
few minutes he would die.

At the edge of town, Gil turned
Quorra to a walk. Home and rider
passed the dark Livery Stable, Ev
Marshall, Prop, and then hoofbeats
rang on the cold-hard floor of a
canyon of dark stone fronts. Passing



*"I guess you see now, Eddie — my 'buddy' is the guy at the
boarding place, right?"*

through light from the Pokes O'Gold's
bright windows, Gil's charcoaked
hands reminded him.

He urged Quorra past the dumpy
bit lobby of The Marshall House, still
owned by Ev Marshall. Passed the
white belined church — its contrast
due to Marshall's generous donation
and his tireless efforts in raising the
required balance.

"If a town ever belonged to one
man," Gil thought grimly, "Sandown
belongs to Ev Marshall."

One day, six years ago, his horse
— more dead than alive from hard
riding — stumbled into Sandown. He

himself — more dead than alive from
a gunshot wound — and his name
was Ewart.

Real peaceful-like he was — for six
months. Then Art Hegarty and his
boys came to town. They came with
the strike at Hard Rock, 40 miles
West. It was then that Sandown
learned that Ewart's real name was
Evert Marshall — better known as Ev
Marshall, gunslinger. The whole town
knew by the way he led Sandown of
Hegarty's gang and wanted himself
for blood!

Soon after, Ev Marshall won the
Pokes O'Gold in a poker game and
sold it to a gambler who drifted in a
week later. It was then he built The
Marshall House. It was mainly Ev
Marshall who'd pushed Sandown, an
old overright station on the Butter-
field Stage Line, into a prosperous
outlet and moving town. And it was
he who'd got Sandown a working
sheriff.

Gil admired Marshall for changing
from a gunman to a respected
citizen. He bitterly was a self-made
man, and, certainly —

Gil passed up Quorra before the
low lighted doorway. When trouble

Palms made poor rafters

THE HUMPIES of early settlers in Queensland were rough and ready
structures of native timber.

Rafters were a problem, but the old family thought they saw a solution
in the beautiful creek palm trees having permanent canopies.

The tall, slender trees were felled and split, giving long roof supports.
But they were not durable, as the fibres quickly dried and shrunk so
that roofs would not hold in storm.

The roof members were scratched off when cyclonic winds hit the coast,
and after that "palms" was out of native material.

was afoot, and generally when it wasn't, the light never went out in the sheriff's office.

He swung down and tied Quirens to the hitching rail. He eased the cylinder of his shotgun out for inspection and aimed it back again. He adjusted his tied-down holster.

He was tired, weary and cold. His wrist and finger joints were stiff. He was in no condition to gun down this sheriff. But he was determined to do it now and get on with tracking down Joe Durston — already several hours away.

A strange combination of exhilaration and dread gripped him. His sitting jaw stretched the wind-carved, beak-nosed skin of his face. His scalp-itch scratched.

He pushed his feet down up

"Thought you'd change your mind, Kimbers." Marshall's voice was deep and kindly.

In a slow continuous motion, his feet eased off the drawer and he slid his book, open and back up, alongside his .45 on the table. Sight of that book bothered Gil.

Marshall was a heavy-framed man, horse-sold and strong. He was in scale with his longhorn mustache. Since his showdown with Hogarty, he had become a deeply religious man seeking atonement. "You did change your mind?"

"I—" Gil's voice was emotion heavy. "I'm gonna kill you." He closed the door and leaned lightly against it again. He breathed heavily, yet he was ready to spring into action. His long arms hung loose at

spread on the table and the .45 alongside the bible. "When you pointed me yesterday afternoon and turned Durston loose, he went after her — just as I told you he would."

"But he started south," Marshall said emphatically. "I saw to that."

"Did you see to it that he circled back to my ranch?" He—" Gil tried to swallow the anger that was choking him. He couldn't say what he knew Durston had done to John. "—then he fired my horse. He did all that while you held me to jail."

"I thought he was just another drifter bring-up a strike. I gave him a chance to move on." He paused thoughtfully, saying Gil. "You couldn't have gone 12 miles to your ranch and back since I turned you loose."

Gil stretched out his charcoal blackened hands. "How do you think I got this? It isn't 12 miles over Ridge Trail."

"Ridge Trail — at night! That's sheer suicide — especially with moon-cast shadows. You're drunk."

"No," Gil said evenly. "But I'm going to be drunk — soon as I kill you and track down Joe Durston."

Marshall nodded slowly. "No man without kill in his heart could cross Ridge Trail twice in one night."

"It was four for John's salary that took me across the first time. But it was kill in my heart that brought me back."

"Kimbers, I haven't permitted gunning or killing in Sundown since—"

"You declared yourself sheriff. Well, I'm changing that. Tomorrow, we'll shoot a new sheriff."

"Stop the threat," Marshall barked. "Tell me what's behind this — or is that too much to ask?"

"Not too much — just more than you deserve." Heat from the stove was making chills from Gil's bones, making him drowsy.

After he'd told what he'd found at his Lost Canyon Ranch, Marshall demanded, his eyes narrowing, "Why would Durston do that?"

"He's out to spend everything for me. He—"

"Gd," Marshall protested impatiently. "you got Durston all wrong. Yesterday morning, like I told you, he stopped in here, inquired about you — friendly as you please. Said you and he prospected together five years ago. Wanted to look you up — talk over old times."

"Sure! You swallowed his yarn and gave him directions to my place. It was just my luck to come to town. Just my luck to see Joe's dog, Wolf, outside the Poke O'Gold."

(Continued on page 76)

Birthplaces of hurricanes

WHEN THE WIND gets up to 155 knots or so — which sometimes happens in a hurricane from the Pacific or Indian Ocean — no structure above ground is safe from damage.

Durston was hit by 145 mile per hour winds about 70 years ago, and some walls were blown over at the town.

In January, 1952, Fiji was struck by 162 knot winds from two "cyclones" operating off the island group.

One of these atmospheric whirls had its origin in the western Coral Sea, and as its outward drift it became associated with another cyclone centered of New Caledonia.

One of the great fallacies is that the cyclones which affect our west coast form near Wallis Island, comparatively close to Queensland.

In reality, most of the cyclones that form near Queensland head away from our shores. But a long line of disastrous cyclones have their rise in the Solomons — New Hebrides — Fiji region, coming 1000 miles or more to strike at us.

through the distorted rectangles of light on the three wooden steps. He pushed through the glass door with its sign. Ev Marshall, Sheriff, Gil thought, inwardly a self-made man. Certainly a self-made sheriff — and to everyone's surprise a damn good one.

Sundown had grown and prospered under his bat against gun totting. It became known as Ev Marshall's town. His word was law — and his word was usually just. But yesterday afternoon, he had gone too far.

Only the old grandfather clock in the corner of the justice office subtly greeted Gil. The warmth of the polished stone felt good.

Sheriff Ev Marshall sat with his back tilted in his chair, his back toward the pigeon-holed wall desk, and his feet on a pulled out table drawer. He looked up from the book which he was reading. His grey eyes twinkled with Gil's — as they had twinkled with known bikers — and gave no sign of fear.

his sides, his hands slightly hooked, his fingers spread. His face felt drunk by trail-dread tears and fresh tears glazed his eyes — almost blinded him.

"Why?" Marshall demanded. "Or don't you need a reason?" When Gil didn't answer, he continued. "You got guts, plenty of 'em. But I'm still sheriff in this town, and there's still a law on the books that says, 'Check all guns when you're passing through.' He held out a big hand for the .45 on Gil's gun belt.

"I've got reason — more than I can hear. I'm here to avenge my wife's death."

"John?" Marshall stood up, his hands spread, spread on the table between them. "I'm sorry, Gil. Mighty sorry. But why—"

"Durston killed John and fired our horse."

For a brief spell, only the ticking clock watched the silence of the room. Gil's eyes never left Marshall's, but he was aware of Marshall's hands

GOLDILOCKS







GOLDBLOCKS

Janet's just combed her long blonde hair, and now she's striking these poses, where her golden locks are plain to view—with anything else which appeals to you.



SUB HERO'S LAST COMMAND

All Gilmore's instincts, all his navy training, told him to put the safety of his ship above everything else . . .

FACT / LEN GUTTRIDGE

JULY 3, 1942, dawned miraculously clear — for the Aleutians, the group of islands stretching out from the tip of Alaska towards Russia. Only a few fog patches lingered like dawdling ghosts, and from the US Submarine Growler's bridge not a man could look fore and aft along her steel-gray 312-foot length and see both bows and stern. And as the Growler worked its towards Kiska at periscope depth around 6540, Lieutenant Commander Gilmore had a sharply-defined view both of the harbor's backdrop of barren hills and the masts and superstructure of three war vessels at anchor.

6540. For the past hour Gilmore had been riding the periscope handles, face glued to the eye-caps, his income commands steadily nudging the sub closer to the harbor until he now lay about five miles out. He turned from the periscope at last and faced his executive officer.

"It wouldn't seem right, would it, Arnie?" His thin lips twitched in a smile. "I mean, waddup the Growler's last war patrol without at least an A for effort."

He poked a thumb at the periscope. Lieutenant Commander Arnold Schade grasped the handles, showed his face against the eyepiece. He whistled softly, "I see what you mean." His shoulders tensed. "Destroyers."

Gilmore was already planning the approach. With visibility so good the Growler would have to go in carefully. Gilmore couldn't afford to show his periscope more than an inch or two above the light swell. It would take only a single hasty look-out on any one of those destroyers and all three ships would be after the Growler at a 30-knot clip, letting fly with their own torpedoes and depth charges. Gilmore moved in slowly

The Japs had made their grab for the Aleutians as a diversion before the battle of Midway. On June 3 the enemy took Iwoa commander, Admiral Kakuta, had sent 72 carrier-based bombers and support Zeros thundering over Dutch Harbor, and the first enemy bombs slammed on North American soil. But even more annoying to Washington's high command was the way Kakuta's forces had set about occupying the western end of the bleak island chain, settling in off Kiska and Attu as though they intended to stay.

Since before the onslaught on Pearl Harbor, the fog-shrouded Aleutians had been patrolled by no more than half a dozen US Navy S-class submarines, a class written off for efficient fast submarine duty as far back as 1925. But hampering the enemy's supply lines to his Aleutian garrisons would now call for blackops, hit-and-run interception, and fast patrol tactics. So coded alarm signals flashed from the Navy Department and across of the latest fleet subs quit the central Pacific and set course for Dutch Harbor. Among the first to arrive was the Growler, commissioned just three months.

The Aleutian patrol was a submariner's nightmare. Bulked steel dropped a constant sweat of condensation, the dampness posed a deadly peril of shorted switches and circuit gear spluttering on a flesh fire, and frustrated seamen shufled constantly on soggy bunks. Bridge lookouts suffered tortures. Waves surged endlessly over the sub's exposed bridge, and not even the protection of gloves kept fingertips from freezing in bone-deep blood-shot eyes streamed from the strain of peering into what seemed a permanent wall of fog.

But today there was no fog —

when they could have used it — and that increased the danger as they moved closer.

In the Growler's control room, Arnie Schade eyed the skipper as they approached the harbor. This wasn't exactly the sort of action his guys had longed for. No slam-bang glory ride, zapping torpedos fore and aft. Instead, the situation called for cool-headed caution. Yet precisely because the skipper wasn't the type to jump the gun, not a man on the boat would have refused to stake his life on Commander Gilmore's judgment.

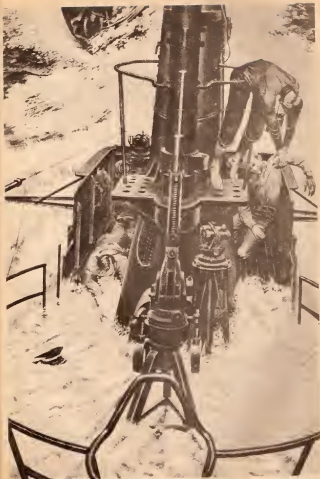
For one thing, they knew Gilmore was no greenhorn. At 40, the Alabama-born sub commander was a family man with a wife and two kids in New Orleans. His first Navy hitch had been as an ordinary seaman before he went on to Annapolis, graduating in 1924. He put in three years on the battleship Mississippi as an ensign and six months on the destroyer Perry.

In January, 1931, Gilmore reported to the Navy's submarine school at New London, Conn., for underway training. Before the Japs threw their surprise party at Pearl Harbor, he had completed a couple of pleasure tours as executive officer on the subs Shark and Dolphin. The Growler was his first wartime command. And he was the Growler's first commander . . .

"Slow engines. Rig for silent running."

The pulsing electric motors subsided to a hum. Anticipation rippled through the sub. Running silent at five knots with all tubes ready, the Growler began her direct approach.

The Japanese destroyer division had been ordered by Admiral Kakuta to escort a Kiska-bound merchant-



men packed to the gunwales with reinforcements for the island garrison. Once the troop transport made safe harbor the destroyers had stood to sea again, only to be halted a couple of miles out by a radio flash forecasting dirty weather. They had dropped anchor—the Kansen, Shurumi and the Arise.

"Stand by how tubes" Tension like inevitable coals gripped the men in the Growler's control room. On Howard Gilmore it didn't show "Up periscope."

A soft whine as the long cylinder snaked up from its well. Gilmore pressed his eye to the eyepiece and sensed calm commands: "Bearing—mark." No tremor in his voice: "Range—mark."

"Two-o-five-oh-oh," came the quartermaster's response. And minutes later "One-seven-five-oh."

Seconds ticked by. In the forward torpedo room someone let a long breath out slowly. "You suppose the Old Man wants to go aboard one of them cars and say hello to the Nips before shlobbering 'em?"

"Range—One-two-five-oh."

Arise Schade wasn't fooled by the skipper's detachment. Gilmore's demeanor had taken guts and care during. Destroyers were not considered suitable sub targets. Their shallow draft, high speed and maneuverability made them perfect hunters, unlikely victims.

The new electric torpedoes were not yet in general use, and those the Growler carried were of the last

so-called "steam" variety. Racing across the sea, they trailed a dead giveaway of the sub's exact position: a broad ribbon of foam. Any sub captain hurrying a steam torpedo at an enemy destroyer was inviting self-destruction.

And diving immediately didn't guarantee escape either. The Japs had equipped their escort vessels with sensitive sonar gear. No matter how

furtively your sub slipped or roller-coastered, those telltale echoes would keep booming off her hull, very likely attracting a shattering salvo of depth charges.

"Fire one," Growler latched as the first fish jumped from its tube and streaked for the Shurumi. Eight tense men in the control room ticked off the seconds. Schade finally muttered, "Aaaa."

Gilmore, up in the conning tower, had already called, "Fire two."

The waiting this time was rewarded by a thunderclap that jolted the Growler. The 2050-ton Shurumi staggered under the torpedo's impact and one of her Kampon boilers exploded. A fiery spear leaped from her bowels to impale the low overhang. Back broken just shaft the funnel, the destroyer listed heavily. Blazing smoke engulfed a frantic swarm of Jap seamen rushing for the side.

Arise Schade grabbed the Ship's Talker telephone and yelled, "All hands, hear that? One Jap destroyer in the air!"

Gilmore permitted himself a quick grin then resumed issuing orders. The sub swung about and centered on the second target.

"Fire three. Fire four."

The third 21-inch fish streaked for the Kansen and blew her bow off. Burning debris rained sailing around the Arise eight-seconds before she herself caught the fourth torpedo square amidships. The destroyer's



"I'm not interested in how you did it in the good old days, use the stereoscope!"



"Harry, you come right back here."

Black tracker's survival secrets

WHEN GOING ON a long "lookout" on *Asayuki's* and center a torpedoes black tracker quietly drank as much water as he could and then dozed off in the cool of the evening.

Early in the morning he looked for a shady tree, and dug a hole under it until he struck sand.

Then he sat down in the hole and pulled the sand so round him until only his head was out.

He stayed there in the cool and the shade until it got dark again. Then he continued on his way until the next day brought renewed heat.

Travelling only by stages at night and resting up by day, the tracker covered distances that no white man could have traversed — simply by cutting down the natural law of moisture from his body.

well-trained torpedomen had, moments before, managed to launch two of their own mounds at the American sub, but scarcely a man on the *Arac* survived to see results. All three of her boilers blew up simultaneously, and 400 tons of fuel oil drenched the screaming crew with an avalanche of fire.

"Down periscope," Gilmore said. "Time to cut and run, *Arac*."

The *Growler* dived to 100 feet as the *Arac's* torpedoes vanished overhead, close enough to be heard without the aid of sound gear. Also audible to the *Growler's* crew were recording pops and cracks of torpedoes and depth charges detonating in the tubes and racks of the *Katami* and *Shirami*, still blazing furiously in Kinko harbor.

Now that the *Growler* had shown what she could do, her crew hungared for more and the officers showed their enthusiasm. Gilmore left its periscope. Kinko's a catch, let's go back in there and wipe out the whole damned anchorage. Fog? We'll use it for cover. Come on, skipper.

It was too much to resist, and back into Kinko went the *Growler*. Spotting a big fish ship in the gloom, Gilmore treated it hulk-and-rock fashion, following an irregular pattern of dive and surface. And he surfaced once too often. A fog bank had just lifted, like a curtain neatly raised — to reveal a Japanese destroyer dead ahead, plunging towards the *Growler* at top speed.

"Take her down," Gilmore ordered crisply. Instantly he moved back with himself for having yielded too readily to battle fever.

The destroyer chased *Growler* with depth charges as far as she approached to Dutch Harbor. The sub ran deep. Most of the attacks were on line but off on range. Even so, the *Growler* made port with her soundgear crippled and a periscope tube bent.

Gilmore viewed the episode as a

warning, a lesson confirming his basic philosophy of intelligent caution. Calculated risks? Certainly you couldn't operate without them. But you weren't supposed to take the wrong chances. The ship and crew came before everything. Nothing else mattered but their survival to fight and fight again.

This had become Commander Gilmore's firm philosophy. He couldn't know how destiny had arranged to test the strength of his devotion to that code.

The *Growler* spent her second patrol harassing the enemy's supply lines between her fleet base at Truk

and Rabaul to the south, the keystone of Japan's power in the South Pacific.

The night of April 25 was muggy, with lightning dancing along the horizon. Lieutenant Landon Davies had the bridge. At 2130 the standing lookout called, "Ship off the starboard bow."

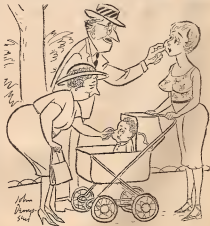
Davies squinted through binoculars into the blackness. "Destroyer at 1000 yards," he shouted down the commanding tower hatch. "Call the captain." To the lookout he yelled, "Clear the bridge!"

In the control room Commander Gilmore took the periscope, assessed the situation and ordered a submerged attack at periscope depth. "Stand by to fire bow tubes." Five one. Five two. — Five three.

All missed! Gilmore heard a hoarse chorus of curses. In all probability, the fault wasn't the *Growler's* anyway — it was no secret that an appalling percentage of torpedoes loaded on US subs were defective.

That was a thought for which Gilmore had no time. He was watching something else. The destroyer. He stopped back quickly from the periscope. "She's coming right at us. Down periscope. Dive. Dive."

The destroyer passed overhead,





"Here, go with the chief, I've just made what would be considered in Wall Street circles as a very good business deal."

throbbing screws visible to the Growler's crew before the sub plunged deeper. The Growler's sound gear detected additional ships on the scene, cross-crossing overhead. Gel more held his boat at 15 fathoms. She glided like an underwater ghost.

"Key for depth charges," Gecord granted the order. There was no thrill in being a target. The silent mechanism included the air-conditioning. Soon the heat of engines, motors and relays would be creeping through the boat. The plane-men and helmsmen had to shift to hand controls and soon they would be gasping from turning the rudder and pump fans by the shore made power.

Down came the depth charges — click boom — weak. Click boom — weak. The sub's hull whipped and rolled with every concussion. Men floundered, rolled, and curled as they were pitched into bruised heaps on the seething deck plates. Light bulbs popped, vent lines and power cables twanged like a lunatic's guitar. Men gagged on

mouthfuls of soot dust, paint flakes and light-bulb fragments, whirling about in small blizzards.

Three hours and 53 depth charges later it was over — damage relatively minor.

But there was an unusually sober look on Commander Gecord's face.

He had just made a tour of the ship. "That depth-charging was tough on the men," he said quietly. "They would like to pay the Japs back for it I think they should."

The moment she broke surface, Growler's lookouts spotted the tail end of a Jap convoy. With a single torpedo, the Yank sub sent a 3000-ton jumbo spinning to the bottom. Three days later the Growler shifted location and began crisscrossing up and down the waters west of New Britain. She sank a 6000-ton cargo ship within 40 minutes of sighting.

On September 4, the Growler slammed torpedoes into the *Kashima*, a 4500-ton ammunition ship, until she blossomed into a monstrous fireball, and 36 hours later a salvo of Growler's fish sliced a 3000-ton man-of-war in two and both halves sank like boulders. By the end of her patrol the Growler had accounted for no less than 24,000 tons of enemy shipping.

But if the Growler's record blew out, was a jackpot patrol, her third was a dead loss. The Japs were making a last desperate effort to save the remnants of their garrison on Guadalcanal, and all available anti-air warfare craft had been dispatched by the Imperial Navy to keep the supply and evacuation routes flushed of American harassment. The Growler came tonight sniffling for kills, with a fresh load of tin fish on her racks, modernized surface radar, and a brand-new 20 mm cannon hoisted to her afterdeck.

There ought to have been opportunities galore for action. But there weren't. The Growler's frustrated crew spent their time idly watching ships weaving with US planes.

Then came the fateful fourth patrol.

The Growler cleared Brisbane, Australia, on New Year's Day, 1943.

Hidden cargoes in cat came

WHEN SUGARCANE was cut and loaded by hand — very hard work — little or no rubbish accompanied it to the mill.

But now that the giant press is mechanically cut and loaded, useless green tops, trash, pieces of wood and overlying stones are incorporated with the cane.

Men are employed at the mill to watch for extraneous matter and report it. Visual most commonly are large stones which may damage the mill's shredding gear at the rollers.

Centers are fired a dollar a pound weight of any rocks taken from their tracks or bins of cane and stones weighing 12 lbs or more are often "caught".

A man at Plant Creek mill, near Eureka, "booked" two stones aggregating 32 lbs one day last season, and the year before another chap found a monster weighing 35 lbs.

and returned to her station athwart the enemy's shipping lanes.

The Growler was making an approach south of Sefton Street for a night surface attack on a convoy heading through Gascot Channel. It was a pint-size convoy — two merchantmen under escort of a pair of patrol craft. Gilmore established range and course, then sent the sub on a fast run south which he calculated would give the Growler a position ahead and on the convoy's projected route.

Gilmore had figured accurately. The convoy came steaming down the track about 0300 next morning and, torpedoes ready, the Growler closed on target.

Then the escorts spotted her. Swinging out in a panic movement, they came in from opposite directions, three-makers booming. Shells screamed over the sub's conning tower and bridge.

"Lookouts 'below," Gilmore shouted. "Clear the bridge. Take her down fast. Dive. Dive." The sub plunged to periscope depth about 40 feet down, but the high-speed screws could be heard above on either bow.

"Flag for depth charges. Rig for silent running."

Then came the pounding as really fierce Shock waves battered the 312-foot sub like sledgehammers, and as she dodged her only chance 46 men were thrown about like toy soldiers in a shaken shoebox. It seemed to go on and on. At 0403, after ninety minutes, violent concussion found a weak spot.

A torpedoeman in the forward torpedo room was just opening his mouth to curse the lugs above, when a jet of water splashed into his face



"You'll like the boat! Mr. Belmore is a warm friendly master-slave relationship."

with the kick of a high-pressure hose.

In the control room Gilmore got the report from Damage Control: ruptured manhole gasket in the forward ballast tank — water pouring into the forward torpedo room.

The commander was ready. "Get a bucket brigade in that torpedo room fast. Cover that leak with sheet rubber and deck plates."

Gilmore knew it would be tough and go. Submerged, only very limited emergency repairs were possible and they might not be enough. But he

wasn't about to surface yet. There was a hell in the depth charging, but it could be a trick to lure him torpede.

Then, as the damage control crew labored in the sloping, scummy water, the depth charging started again. The crew worked on.

They staggered the leak. But would the makeshift plug hold. Gilmore waited for another ducking of the depth-charge salvoes, then cautiously sent the Growler up to periscope depth. A sweep of the scope revealed empty seas but for a distant smudge of the convoy's smoke and a lone destroyer on the outermost horizon.

Gilmore ordered "all ahead full", dipping, coasting west, and not until sighted did he break surface so the ruptured manhole could be opened and a new gasket installed.

Less than 36 hours later, on February 7, 1943, Commander Howard Gilmore saved his submarine for the last time.

"Step on the starboard bow," Landon Dumas was Officer of the Deck, and he'd spotted the distant shape before the lookout.

Gilmore climbed up on bridge. After checking with Dumas, he ordered a "turnaway", giving his torpedoeman an opportunity to make ready their tubes. Another 30 minutes and the sub had swung back to close on surface.



"Well, this is goodbye, Mershe — it's been fun."

(Continued on page 71)

YOU'VE GOT TO BE QUICK

He was just one more shy country boy down on his luck in the city — until he found somebody he cared enough to fight for.

FICTION / HERBERT T. FLETCHER

AT FIRST the trip down from Brisbane with Barton had been a bit of a lark — the "working holiday" idea that sounded good to Macey's 20-year-old years at the time and promised a bit of excitement in his life.

Now it was a grey depression checking the life out of him because he couldn't find a job himself. Probably, Macey thought it was because he had "country" written all over him — or was it because he'd done only timber cutting before and knew nothing else?

Barton had done all right, he could drive anything with wheels and quickly landed himself a job transporting oranges to South Australia and back. He hadn't seen or heard of Barton since. To hell with Barton, he thought, he wasn't much of a mate anyway. I'm all right, Jack.

In Macey's pocket was his last \$5, and no prospects of anything unless he found a job. Four days already of hunting for work and nothing but worn boot leather to show for it. He could do with a good publicity officer and a brass band to promote himself!

Finally he sat on the GPO steps in the sun, watching the people shuffling by and wondering what he should do next.

The rains of humanity burned past unnoticed, and his thoughts went back to the girl again. The one he'd spoken to on his first day in Sydney. He'd been looking for a postcard to send home to his parents, the usual "everything fine" note that would keep them from worrying, when she had come from behind the counter and asked could she help.

He tried to ease her from his thoughts, but like the tide her face reappeared again and again. He bit his lip, conscious of his weakness, and knowing no matter how hard he fought against it he wouldn't rest till he saw her again.

And that, he knew, would only make it that much worse.

He sighed in annoyance, not wanting to see her and yet knowing he had no power over the feeling. As he moved along Pitt Street he hoped some distraction would turn him from his path. But eventually he found himself in front of the large stationary shop, staring at the window display of items he had no interest in at all.

Then, finally, unable to hold back any longer, he was drawn inside. His belly was jumping with nerves, and his eyes went to the counter behind which she worked.

He saw her immediately and his mouth tightened, as a numbing sensation went through his body and he was very conscious of the throb of his heart and the aggrivating pins and needles.

She had a round, pleasant but rather ordinary face, and yet he was attracted to her with a suddenness compulsion which he couldn't account for. He'd always imagined himself chasing an attractive girl — never a plain one. She'd be 19, he thought, staring at her, a year or two younger than himself. He couldn't keep his eyes off her.

She had red hair and he could see her well-shaped legs through the glass counter. He continued to study her, pleased he had come in here in one way and disappointed in himself

when he thought more about the complications.

He was better at the silly way he'd come in just to look her up, and he couldn't understand why he was drawn so irresistibly to her like a plant reaching for the sun. And yet he couldn't force himself to turn and walk away.

"Hello," she said as he moved to her counter, "still here in Sydney, I see." She smiled broadly.

He nodded as he tried to unscramble his thick tongue, all his intended conversation lost within the blank depths of his mind. He hoped when he found his voice it wouldn't come out tangled up like it usually did when he spoke to girls back home.

He smiled at that — what girls? The ones in the Post Office, or Wundy who worked in the fruit shop and once speaking to those girls was something that sapped his courage.

"How are you today?" he managed to say, his nerves squaring like a pot of worms. Why did he find it so difficult to converse with girls? Why? Why? Why?

"Oh, busy as usual," she said with a grin. "You know how it is." Her eyes held his and she pointed. Her mouth was rather large, he noticed now — not that it mattered to him!

"Yeah, I know," he said. He wondered whether he ought to buy something meaningless, to keep the boss off her back in case she was now talking to a customer.

"I'd like a pen," he said, "just a cheap one." He wondered why he was acting so foolishly, wanting to spend what little money he had left on a pen!





"I must remind you that we never had this narrowest small eating meat on Fridays was permitted and English was used for the Mass."

She reached beneath the counter, and he started to look down the front of her dress and then turned his head away with a pang of guilt.

"What about these?" she asked, placing a box on the counter with colored pens arranged in it.

He took a deep breath, aware of the roaring in his ears, the weakness in his knees. He could smell her perfume and he wished again he hadn't come here to himself, make a fool of himself.

He clutched the counter and opened his mouth. "What time do you knock off?" he heard himself asking. He could have bitten his tongue off, because he knew he had taken a positive step now and couldn't retreat.

She looked surprised and he saw the quick intake of breath, the fingers clenched tightly — and was that a look of pleasure in her eyes?

"Five o'clock," she said, watching him intently. "Why?"

He swallowed, trying to dislodge the ball of potty in his throat. Why didn't he run now, instead of standing here getting tied up with . . .

"Is it all right if I wait for you?" he asked, feeling sure he had choked and had not made an idiot of himself and praying earnestly she wouldn't laugh at him. And yet, in one way he wished she would turn him down, tell him to beat it, or whatever girls told you when they weren't interested in you.

He crossed his fingers now as he waited, sure that everybody nearby in the store had heard him ask and were now watching and listening.

Again her eyes were on him like soft warm rain, and he felt he could have stood there forever just watching the expression in them.

"I'd like that," she said.

"Thanks," he said gratefully. The seed was planted. He didn't thought he'd be gone enough, but he'd won through. What happened next?

And then he was better again, only too conscious of his dwindling supply of money that had to do him till he found a job. And now he had

lunched on to a girl to help him spend it!

As he stunked off he realized with surprise he hadn't bought anything in the shop, his last 55 still remained intact.

So far

It was five o'clock and the hurrying people storming past made him feel he was hemmed in and suffocating. The traffic was a slow exhaust-rooking procession that made him wonder why people insisted on driving into the city.

Shops were closing now. There was a kind of excitement, as though prisoners had been released into the daylight again, and he kept his eyes open for the girl.

He realized he was behaving foolishly when he was all but broke, but he couldn't help it. He knew he'd be like a fish out of water if he tried to ignore her.

You thought of shoelaces, he told himself, and it meant money straight away — money he could ill-afford. That's what Barton always said. He screwed as he remembered — damn Barton, anyway.

For uncomfortable seconds he tried to make his mind up, decide on what he was going to say and do when she came out. In the midst of panic, he made a half-hearted attempt to walk off when he suddenly saw her step out on to the pavement. He hesitated, caught between confusion and curiosity.

He stiffened as he saw her searching for him in the window-



"Remember when air was clean and sex was dirty."

The first Australian-made car

THE FIRST major vehicle ever built in Australia was produced by Herbert Thompson, of Armadale, Victoria, in 1899.

Thompson built the car around a lightweight steam engine, and described it as a steam-powered motor phaeton. Steam power was preferred by many early car designers, because it offered greater reliability and a better top speed.

Thompson constructed a number of similar cars before the turn of the century, and in 1900 a Thompson car made the first overland car journey in Australia.

The car travelled from Bathurst, NSW, to Melbourne — a distance of 4926 miles. This marathon journey took 10 days, and the car's average running speed was 5.72 miles an hour.

packed crowds, and before he could move he noticed a figure step beside her.

From where he was standing he heard the man speak, "Want a lift today, Jane?"

Macey stopped in bewilderment, wondering if this was his opportunity to pull out while he was still in front, when she noticed him and waved cordially.

The sight of her smile injected much-needed confidence into him. He found himself beside her, and the man turned cold eyes his way. "What do you want, pal?" he snapped.

"Sorry, Bob, he's taking me home," she said and raised her eyes at Macey, eyes that seemed uncertain and asking for support.

Macey studied the man, tall, coldly framed, an executive type with the breadth of a lunch-hour driver.

"You've got to be quick," Macey said with a grin, "I asked her first." He retained the dimness of his voice gave away his nervousness, and he stood there shuffling his feet and wishing he were a hundred miles away.

"Who is that fellow?" the other demanded. "You know I always pick you up Wednesdays, Jane."

"Not this Wednesday, thanks, Bob," she said, her eyes worried, turned once more to Macey as if looking for support.

Macey stood there flustered and tense, at a loss for something to say. He was not used to arguing verbally, especially over a girl. In the past he'd mostly found it quicker and more simple to settle any of his arguments with his fists.

He looked at the man and it was plain this situation was going to develop into a heated dispute.

"You'd better take a powder," the man said threateningly. "I've got two minutes in that car over there."

Macey stared the girl, the anger welled inside him, frustrated by his inability to talk back. He realized if he back-pedaled now the other

would put the bounce in and all would be lost, especially his chances with the girl.

There was a roaring in his ears again, and he realized he had grabbed the man's coat as he clenched fist with uncontrolled anger and was dragging him along the pavement.

"I mightn't talk good," Macey grunted, "but I'll accommodate you if you want to step down this here and argue it out my way."

He saw the relief wash into the girl's face and the uncertainty in the man's. The man blustered. "No need to get tough, fella," he stated. "Let go my shirt."

Macey released him, his voice a hiss. "Don't try to bounce me, mate. I don't like being bodden on."

"Don't hit him, please!" the girl said, grabbing Macey's arm.

"Thank you're smart, don't you?" the man snarled. "Making a fool of me in front of my sister."

Macey sneered himself, the anger like hot fat inside him. He was on familiar ground when it came to fighting. His eyes flashed a warning. "You're the one making a fool of yourself," he said. "You should be more careful what you say and who you say it to."

"I'll see you again," the man threatened as he turned away.

There was the sound of laughter from inside the car as the man moved over to it. Before getting in with the two men he called out, "I won't forget you, fella."

Macey yelled back, oblivious to the curious bystanders gathered around. "Don't press your luck," he called. Then he turned to her. "I'm sorry for making a show of you like this," he said. "I shouldn't have..."

"I'm glad!" she said. "Bob is rather demanding and a bit of a pest. Don't let's talk about it."

He nodded and then remembered something. "By the way, I meant to tell you that I'm out of work and almost broke."

She looked at him as if surprised. "What's that supposed to mean?" she said tightly, her eyes suddenly cold.

A flood of embarrassment asked his face. "I mean I wouldn't be able to take you to a show or even get you a taxi," he explained.

Her face relaxed. "Oh, is that all,"



"Hurry dear! My dashboard is beginning to over-oh!"

she said "For a moment I thought you meant something else." She tried to laugh. "You can never be too careful - Sydney isn't the lilywhite place it's made out to be."

He grinned and rubbed at his chin. "Let's have a coffee," he announced, changing the subject. "I can afford that much, anyway."

She selected a small coffee shop nearby. It was cramped inside, the tables so small their knees touched as they sat opposite each other. The seats were hard and stiff backed and the cups were narrow at the bottom with wide tops like mugs and the coffee was hot, sweet and tangy.

They enjoyed their coffee slowly, making talk and looking away when their eyes met.

He didn't do or like either. She lived at Campus and she'd never been to Brisbane.

They had little in common, but they found a lot to talk about and she was good company having him laughing to no time. He hadn't talked with a girl with a sense of humor before and he found he was enjoying himself and at the same time losing a little of his nervousness.

She mentioned there could be a temporary job for him at the timber yard where her brother worked at Glbebe.

"That'd be good for a while," he said. "I'm used to working with timber."

"They pay good money," she said. "Ray's been there for years."

pull her chair out as she rose. He'd seen that done on television and he felt pleased with himself.

They went by train to Campus and it was getting dark as he walked her from the station. He felt he'd found someone to give his life new interest, someone to keep him in Sydney.

"I'll wait for you tomorrow afternoon," he said. "I'll try and get a job somewhere in the morning, there are a few factories near where I live. No use waiting the day."

"If there's a vacancy at the timber yard, Ray will let it up for you, don't worry."

He turned to leave and let go her soft hand with reluctance. "Thanks," he said, "goodnight."

He watched her going up the path and she waved. As she let herself in the front door she waved again before disappearing inside.

The night was suddenly cold and lonely as he walked back toward the railway. He felt like a school kid again, going through the awkward stage of puppy love. He wondered what was going to happen to take it all from him.

The experience was completely different to his feeling back home on the rare occasions he spoke to girls at a sports' evening or the annual Show. This was what he had been waiting for, dreaming of for so long. It had finally happened.

He kept thinking about this strange sensation within him as he walked. Now he knew that there was a valid reason for it as, once again, he brought her face to mind.

And now he had to return to his cheap share-room in Newtown, to be down disturbed by moans and wailing traffic and planes coming down low on a landing path to Mascot.

He didn't take any notice of the car which had pulled into the kerb behind him. At the last instant, some absurd sense of preservation warned him of the deadly rush of feet. He dodged nimbly and saving himself about, at the ready for anything.

There were three of them, shadowy figures at the light street, and their intentions were very obvious. As the first figure swept past where he had been a moment before Macey panicked at him, then groaned as blows rained on him from behind as the other two closed in.

Then it was a frantic struggle in the darkness, of pushing back and fighting forward, the crack of bones on flesh and theuffling of desperate, twisting bodies - curses and swearing, a struggling battle for survival and supremacy.

(Continued on page 80)

The Koala's monster ancestor

THE AUSTRALIAN KOALA is known the world over as a gentle, slow-moving, tree dweller, covered with soft brownish-grey fur. Next to the kangaroo, it is probably the best-known native Australian animal.

Despite reputations caused by adaptations for its environment, it is not related to any of the true bears, sloths or possums. Its nearest kin appears to be the heavy, ground-dwelling wombat, but even there the relationship is not very close.

But although today the koala stands alone on its branch of the previously monogamous family, paleontologists have found remains of one of its nearest ancestors in Queensland fossil beds.

Inside this ancestor, *Kooladon*, the present-day koala would look like a dwarf.

A modern koala grows to about 30 inches in length, measured from the tip of its nose to the base of its spine. But *Kooladon* was about 10 feet long, and weighed about half a ton - 30 to 40 times as much as his descendant.

Obviously, *Kooladon* was too big to live in trees. He must have been a ground-dwelling creature in the first place, who became smaller and better adapted to life off the ground to escape from enemies and to find food.

"I'm sorry about what happened too," she said. "I forgot it was Wednesday. Bob usually plays squash now where I live on Wednesdays and he drops me off on the way. He was a little embarrassed in front of his mates."

Macey laughed, shrugging it off. The incident was all over as far as he was concerned. "Took me by surprise. I didn't know what to think at first."

"I thought he might hurt you."

Macey stopped and shook his head. "Not likely. I grew up with seven brothers and usually I had at least three fights before breakfast each morning. I'd sooner walk away than fight, if I can. There's nothing to be gained by fighting." He put his elbows on the stump-sized table. "It's only gals that frighten me and make me tongue-tied. Let's talk about you."

He'd guessed about right, she was 20, played tennis and liked dancing.

"I'm not frightened of work," he said, "so if you get your brother to put in a word for me I won't let him down as far as working is concerned."

She didn't say anything, sitting there staring at him as though he had said something that would make the world stop spinning. Then she nodded slowly. "You don't have to tell me that, I know just by looking at you."

"Most of the employment blokes didn't see that by looking," he said curtly. "How come you can?"

"I know what to look for," she said positively.

He let it pass at that. Probably, he thought, she could see something in him - he'd heard about people who considered you like a book.

"I'd better take you home," he said at last.

"I enjoyed the coffee and your company," she said. "Thanks."

He grinned and remembered to



A MAN CAN GET HELLISH LONELY



Women outback get a bit restless when their men are away for too long . . .

THE WESTERN sky was stained blood-red as the sun slid slowly down towards the Bitterroot Mountains 20 miles across the plain. But I had eyes neither for the sinking sun nor the wrinkled brown land. From my vantage point on the clay bank above the creek to where I had swanked a few minutes previously, I was gazing at Tina Dorn, the only white female in 80 miles, lying on her belly near the water's edge, her brown body still wet and glistening after her swim.

She moved slightly forward, and her bare backside pushed up. My

breath caught in my throat and my chest tightened as I stared at the perfect curves of that white, round rump. And to think that Tina was almost 40 — old enough to be my mother.

She got up then and stood feet together, her head thrown back. Then she stretched slowly and sensuously like a cat. When she turned her lean brown body in my direction I forgot to breathe for a second, but Tina did not appear in the least perturbed and made no effort to cover herself. Instead, she smiled up at me, her dark eyes glistening.

"I hope my being here in the river doesn't embarrass you, Arty," she said, quite matter-of-factly.

"I'm — I'm sorry, Tina," I

managed to stammer. "I — I — didn't know you were here, until . . ."

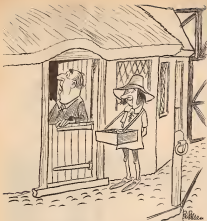
"Like hell you didn't," she laughed derisively, brushing her long black hair from her forehead. "You've been standing on that bloody bank at least five minutes trying to make up your mind if you're a man or what."

I blinked at the taunt. The bitch had seen my reflection in the clear waters of the pool, and now she was daring me, challenging my manhood — the whole 19 years of it.

After all, Big Jim had been gone nearly a week now — he and the black, Sam Boonah. Maybe she was feeling like a tumble in the grass.

FICTION /
HERBERT C. HEILIG





"It's Peter Piper, Dear. Do we need any Pickled Peppers?"

She didn't look her age either, I thought, standing there starkie. Sure as she was, her breasts were large and quite firm and high. Her small waist seemed to narrow, almost mannish legs — but there was nothing mannish about Tina.

Her lips curved in a small grin again and she laughed softly. Then she stooped down, picked up her clothes. She did not put them on, but walked slowly away upstream.

"She's fast cousin to a tart," I decided. All the primitive hunger made me urged me to follow her.

I stood for a few seconds more watching Tina's slowly disappearing naked form, her movements smooth enough to stir me. Who was I trying to fool, anyway? All right, I was lusted enough.

I slid down the clay bank and followed her. A little farther along the creek I found Tina in a secluded place on the bank, her clothes in a heap beside her. She had settled herself on the soft grass, belly down like when I had first spotted her. Her rump wriggled seductively as she heard me approach.

I bent down then and slapped her firm, bare rump.

She turned full over and laughed in my face. "Now just for that, young Artie, you can jump in the

creek and cool off. It might be good for what ails you."

But I saw the bare breasts peering up at me and the seductive white flesh of her body, there in the waning light of late afternoon on a grassy creek bank.

"I have a better idea," I said, "to cure what ails me."

I forgot then that I had ever felt embarrassed, that she was about 15 years older than I was. I forgot, too,

that she was Big Jim Dunn's wife, that he had left me to look after the camp as well as take care of Tina and Sam's babies, Mike, while he and the black went to the station properly way off behind the Bathlathos to buy a mob of horses.

When I sank down on the grass beside her, Tina pretended to draw away. Then she laughed, softly, rolled over, and an arm under my shoulder, I put my own arm around her naked waist and pulled her close to me. She tilted her head back and necked it in the curve of my neck, rubbing her cheek against my chin like a cat, and making strange little sounds in her throat.

Then she started to move her hips and shoulder, pressing hard against me as if trying to get even closer. From then on it was a fight of almost primitive savagery, a fight to get closer and closer to one another. A struggle for absolute fulfillment.

After it was over we lay quiet. I held her close to me, breathing softly, and we dozed. Neither of us were aware of a black form lurking on the bank above us.

Ten minutes later, perhaps a quarter of an hour, we roused, and I felt a cold gripping of guilt twisting my guts. I rolled over on my side feeling sick with self loathing.

"God," I said, "We shouldn't be doing this, Tina — after all you're Big Jim's wife."

"Hell, you just think of that?" And she gave a strange, vicious little laugh and her dark eyes flashed almost savagely. "Why should I worry about Big Jim?" she snapped. "What's he ever done for me — ? Ten years married and not one kid to show for it."

"Perhaps it's not his fault."

"You believe that?"

The bush weather forecasters

BUSHMEN DON'T overrate the cracking frog as a prophet of drought-breaking rain, in spite of its legendary reputation.

They know the frog reacts to growing moisture — humidity — in the air, and that doesn't necessarily mean there will be a downpour.

Storm-birds assure, but that doesn't necessarily mean a storm. Spring — the storm season — is their usual period.

The bush garden appears to know something about the weather, though. When they open their webs in the open it won't rain, no matter how black the weather looks.

Slugs and snails climb on to shrubs and trees when a deluge is imminent, and butterflies and moths seek the shelter of trees when strong winds are coming.

The toronto lullies and is the best indicator of coming rain, but has accuracy in something only the people of the far south use.

When the lullies begin to repair his mound, the drought will end in a few days. The rain will not come until his new "mound" has dried out completely.



"I once took a splinter out of his pan."

I stared at her marvellous, bony body "No."

She stretched out her arms to me. I laughed a laugh almost as savage as hers had been. After that I was lost in a fierce, plunging renewal of fresh love-making.

That night, weary after my exercises, I was about to blow out the hurricane lantern and retire early when I heard a noise at my bed door. Now who could that be? Surely not Tina came for another sneeze?

I opened the door and there stood Nika, Sam Boudard's sister — stark naked. That in itself was nothing, of course. Nika always was naked, except for some native G-string affair.

I said, "What is it you want, Nika?"

She giggled and glanced towards my bunk. "He come in?"

I frowned a no welcome. "What for?"

She pointed to the bunk. "Me stay long night with you, Mister Arty."

She tossed her head and advanced further into the room. Standing there in the dim light of the hurricane I was rewarded that Nika was better built and more attractive than the average gin. Somewhere along the hereditarily trail there could have been a dash of white man's blood. Her naked legs made a rape, flowing curve, and her breasts were heavier and rounder than the average tribe's.

Her eyes too, were different. They were a deep coffee like hue, with sultry lights stirring through them, as she regarded me in seductive fashion. And she was still young — younger than I was. Then I thought of Tina — nearly twice as old as Nika, but white, and hellish scolding.

I turned on Nika then. "Get out you black bitch!" I shouted.

But Nika made no move to go. Instead, she turned on me defiantly. "You no sleep alone me I tell Big Jim you layer alongs across down by the creek."

So Nika stayed at the hut that night. She would have black-mailed me the next night too, had not Big Jim and Sam returned late the following afternoon with a mob of hoxes.

The morning after Big Jim got back I told him that I wanted to draw my time. He didn't make much fun or ask any reasons. "Don't blame you, Arty," he said. "It's a lonely life for a young fellow. All right for the likes of Sam and I, we've got our women."

It was about a year later when I met Big Jim again in the one pub in a western town. He greeted me with a

big grin and shouted me three or four rounds of drinks in rapid succession.

I said, "You won first prize in a lottery or something?"

"Better than that," he boomed. "Tina gave me a son three months back."

"You old devil," I said. "I didn't think you had it in you."

"Took me over 20 years to do the trick," he laughed happily. "And that's not all the news —"

"You mean there's another one on the way?"

"No — of course not. It's about Nika —"

"What's she been up to?" I asked, just a trifle curious.

"The same thing as Tina," said Big Jim. "Only she had a female passenger — and on the same day as Tina gave birth to our son."

"What do you know? It must be the climate out there, Jim."

"Must be," he nodded absently. Then as an afterthought he said, "Nika's kid appears to have a good dash of white in her."

I turned away in case he noticed that my face was a trifle red. "Well," I suggested, "hasn't Nika got some white blood?"

He shook his head. "Not that much." Then after a pause he said, "You wouldn't have been getting in with Nika that time when Sam and I were away, Arty?"

"Oh, come off it now," I denied with pretended indignation. "Nika's lousy."

"A good looking one though," said Big Jim. "I wouldn't have blamed you if you had of played around with her, Arty. A man can be hellish lonely out there."

I couldn't think of a single thing to say.



"The Press is waiting. Emergo unsmiling and right-dipped."

THE SHARK GOD OF MOTURA. Continued from page 8

He patted the skull on its fractured surface. "But at the first of every year, I'll drink a toast to you, that I promise."

Sam gave a light, two-fingered salute. "So long and farewell, Charlie, sleep tight and pleasant dreams! No one will ever bother you here, because this is the most sacred place, and even old Bonga wouldn't dare come near the TAPU reef. You'll never be found! But for a long time these natives will talk you up, telling how their white shark-god snatched you away."

Sam moved down from the ledge and the skeleton, and began to lower himself into the black pool. But before his rubber fins could rise the mirror-like surface, he leapt back, his breath catching painfully in his throat.

Something huge and white, with a great dorsal fin, sank into the depth and disappeared!

He bent down, peering head, trying to penetrate the darkness of the pool, but all he could see was a faint phosphorescent glimmer deep down, like the flick of a lantern's wick.

Then, suddenly, the hollow tomb rebartered under the force of an anemone grinding sound, like a huge floor being slowly shut on rusty hinges. Beneath his body, the ledge shook as if in the final throes of an earth tremor. And the water rose in the vault as if to engulf him, so swiftly that he had to seek refuge on the ledge next to the skeleton.

As swiftly as it had risen the water receded in the pool. There was no indication that there had been an upheaval save for the dripping ledge below and the gentle lapping at its edge.

Sam huddled on the high ledge, teeth clamped hard, his stomach in a tight knot of panic.

Slowly, he lowered himself to the ledge below, stared into the black mystery of the pool. Then, seeing no

movement, he fixed his goggles and put his face below the surface. Instantly he saw what had happened — the arch of the tined opening into the pool had given away, and now its passage was blocked.

He dropped into the pool and swam down. It took him only a few seconds to convince himself that the massive coral obstruction was securely wedged there, without even the tiniest space to insert his fingers.

Trembling and whimpering, Sam crawled back to the ledge, and lay there, beating his fins feebly against the sharp coral.

"You damned fool!" he berated himself. "Now see what you've let yourself in for!" He alternately wept and cursed, in the hysteria of hopelessness, he even yelled for help.

When he finally lifted his head he saw the crabs scurried on the ledge above, their stalked eyes aimed towards him. "Oh, Christ, no, no, no!" he bleated.

Suddenly, Sam lifted his head, straining to listen. The sound of a schooner's bell reached him faintly. The Moana! The irregular backfiring of her auxiliary engine coming closer and closer as she entered the passage into the lagoon.

"Help! Help!" he shouted. "It's Sam Powers! I'm trapped inside the reef!"

But a series of high combets broke over the barrier-reef, drowning out his cries as the Moana skirted the reef and headed toward the customary anchorage.

The light faded in the coral vault. Exhausted and shivering, Sam lay stretched out on the damp ledge. Then abruptly, it was totally dark in the crypt, and he became conscious of the dry scratching sounds of the crabs on the ledge about him. "Oh, God," he whimpered, "I'll make everything right! You can't leave me to this!"

Daylight finally woke into his nightmare. And now there was a new sound — the rattle of the Moana's winch as it raised her anchor.

Sam pressed his swollen mouth to the coral crack. "Please, please, don't go! Don't go! Don't leave me in here!"

But the schooner's engine exploded into life. Sam beat with his hands against the coral prison until they bled, he growled and shrieked apopingly, and for one wild instant he almost crashed his forehead against a sharp coral obelisk.

Then he lay still, eyes wide with horror, listening without breathing as the schooner moved out along the reef passage. The labored sounds of the engine settled down to a regular cadence, like the strange throbbing



"In case we get separated at this party, Harold, thanks for bringing me."

of old Runga's sharkskin drum. At last it faded and merged with the faraway murmur of the sea.

When the spell of Motura had disappeared below the horizon, Captain Riley went off to talk with his Tahitian mate, Oro, who was making an inventory of Sam Powers' personal belongings.

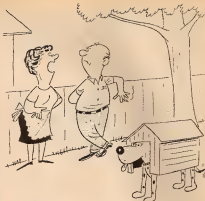
"What I don't savvy," the Captain said, "is how old Runga knew Sam wouldn't be messing with us for Tahiti. You heard what he said: 'No we go Motura for Powers-tune. he go 'way some fancy way like Turi'."

Oro had attended the mission-school in Tahiti, but he was still bound to Polynesian superstitions. He said in a hushed voice: "I think Heorake take away Sam just like Charlie. We look everywhere on Motura, but Sam not anywhere."

"Yeah, we even stayed overnight to have another look this morning. I guess we must have looked under every coconut on that island. Covered every inch of the lagoon, except that taboo reef. No use hunting there."

Riley held up two fingers. "Charlie and Sam — a very strange business."

He drew in his breath jerkily. He decided he'd be more polite to old Runga in future.



ARK.

"Don't you think it's about time you built like a new one?"

think there is progress little in civilization," he concluded, "to appeal to a yeh anyhow."

Sir Edmund was not prepared to forecast either success or failure, and as it turned out no yeh obligingly turned up. However, during the expedition Hilary was told by a high-ranking lama, "There is a yeh skin in the village."

This was Khampang, and the relic was found to be in the house of a frightening old woman believed to be a witch. The skin had been in the village for 240 years and was venerated as a good-luck charm. Sir Edmund had great difficulty in getting it out, because the old woman said she would befall the village if it left.

Eventually Hilary took it under three conditions: that he and his party give a donation to the village monastery, that they permitted one of the headmen to accompany the relic, and that they gave a donation towards the new village school. The final stipulation was that if they had not returned before a fixed date, three Sherpas with the explorer would feed their lands.

So after every village agreed by vote, the sacred object — looking something like a small leather sashy with gager and black hairy hair — was loaned to someone for inspection. Khung-Chumbi, a village headman, went as the guardian of the

scalp. It travelled to Chicago, to Paris and London for inspection by anthropologists, osteologists and zoologists.

At Buckingham Palace, Queen Elizabeth was allowed to look at it, and she received from the headman the gift of some goat's milk butter (goat is not deemed delicious to the food in Nepal and Tibet), tea, and a fly-whisk made from the tail of a yeh. As for the scalp, it was claimed to be that of a fox or a goat, and even the hair seemed to have been worn on.

Despite this setback, the yeh still seems to be around. The job is to pin him (if that is the right word) down. The most circumstantial account fairly recently came from the well-known British mountaineer, Donald Whillans, in 1970. He reported seeing a creature on the mountain side which the Sherpas with him and was a baby yeh.

Whillans told how on he lay in his tent one moonlit night he saw some object moving in the shadow he could make out the arms and legs of the object, which went right across a snow ridge at a height of 12,000-13,000. It looked like something between a bear and a gorka.

As long ago as 1899 a traveller mentioned strange tracks in the Himalayan snows, but not surprisingly more detailed reports of the so-called Abominable Snowman

ON THE TRAIL OF THE YETI

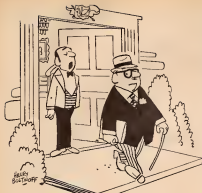
Continued from page 17

"As no one has ever been hurt before, the yetis will be very frightened tonight by our arrival." I was relieved by the assurance.

So far, although the presence of yetis has been so often reported, nobody has yet succeeded in capturing one of these elusive creatures. The leader of the American expedition said on setting out, "We are 100 percent conservative-minded, and we would in no case take a yeti unless a population study showed that they could stand the loss of an individual."

Moreover, as Sir Edmund Hilary said, amid laughter, at a Press conference in Kathmandu, "The Nepalese Government does not allow the export of yeti."

A dozen years back Sir Edmund led an unsuccessful quest for the yeti. The plan was to "shoot" any one sighted with a firearm loaded with a hypodermic syringe charged with a harmless knock-down drug to put it to sleep temporarily. Sir Edmund said that if he were successful in his hunt, after examination he would let the prisoner go. "I



"Don't forget to ask your boss for that raise today, Sir. You've four weeks' behind in my salary."

began to reach the western world only after mountaineers began to penetrate the upper slopes of the Himalayas. It was Lt-Col C E Howard-Bury, in his account of the 1921 reconnaissance of Mount Everest, who first introduced this enigmatical creature to western readers.

He recounted how, to the north-east of Everest, at a height of 21,000 feet, on the Lhakpa Pass, among the tracks of bears and fawns he came across one impression "that looked like a human foot".

He thought it was probably caused by a wolf, but the caravans with him at once proclaimed it to be that of "The Wild Man of the Snows", to which they gave the name of *Maschikangma*, the Abominable Snowman — who from then on was secure of his place in literature, if not in nature.

In an article which Colonel Howard-Bury telegraphed to England, he told of having seen the footprint of the Wild Man of the Snows. He put three exclamation marks behind the statement to dissociate himself from any such belief. But the account arrived at its destination without those qualifying marks, so the first published report of the Abominable Snowman appeared more factual than its author intended.

Four years later an Italian ex-

plorer, a Tombazi, was climbing in Sikkim in the eastern Himalayas. He had this to say about his experiences: "About 10 miles from the Zemu glacier, wildly-gesticulating porters began to attract my attention. Some 600 ft down the valley was an object arousing their comment. The shape resembled that of a human being, walking upright and completely naked. The creature was apparently busy plucking roots. After a few minutes it disappeared.

"Upon closer investigation I found that the foot-prints definitely showed the contour of five toes. No human being had been seen wandering in this direction for a year."

Tombazi's report received scant attention until in 1936 another explorer, Robert Kaulback, found similar tracks at 15,000 ft in the Salween area. Almost at the same time an RAF officer traversing the Nanda Devi region, the central mass of the great mountain range, called that he had spotted similar tracks.

Over the years similar reports have come from other parties. In fact, there is no more persistent legend among these rocky heights than that of the yeti. Nobody who has travelled for any length of time in the "Abode of the Snow" could fail to hear the story, in various guises, which comes out of India, Nepal and Tibet.

One of the most remarkable incidents was related in 1937 by Dr A. G. Probst, a senior scientist of the Geographic Scientific Research Institute of Leningrad University. At the time he was in the Pamir Mountains, from which radiate the Kunlun, Hindu Kush, Kookoroom, Sulaiman, Paropamisus, and Himalaya ranges. He was leading the hydrological section of the International Geophysical Year Joint Expedition of the USSR Academy of Sciences and Leningrad University.

Dr Probst said he had heard reports of snow creatures being seen in these mountain masses, but never expected to see one himself. However, when on the Fedchenko Glacier, some 30 yards above him he saw a figure moving on the mountain side.

At first he thought it was a bear, but "having collected myself it became clear to me that this was no bear, but a human-like creature. It walked on its legs, slightly bent forward. It wore no clothing and its body was covered with thick, reddish-brown hair. I could not make out whether it was male or female."

Perhaps the most notable story relating to the yeti is the one attributed to another celebrated mountaineer, Mr Frank Smythe, fellow-climber with Eric Shipton in his expedition, "The Snowman is reported to be large, fierce, and carnivorous. The large ones eat yaks and the small ones men. The Snowman is sometimes white and sometimes black or brown. Even to see him means death.

Towards the end of 1937 he set out to explore a previously unvisited glacier-filled valley. He was accompanied by three trustworthy, intelligent Tibetans, all skilled climbers. One morning at 14,500 ft, Smythe saw before him some tracks which he first took to be those of a man.

On coming up to them, however, he saw the imprint of a huge foot — apparently that of a hugo — and in length of stride closely resembling his own tracks. When the three porters joined him one and all declared that the tracks had been made by a Snowman. Smythe started to make measurements and take photographs, but the porters bundled together in that reluctance which in the Tibetans means fear.

As he believed he was the first European ever to have photographed such tracks, Smythe spent no pains to make a complete record. On the level the footmarks appeared 12 in. to 13 in. in length and six inches in breadth, but uphill they averaged

only eight inches in length though the breadth was the same.

The single was one and a half feet to two feet on the level, but considerably less uphill, and the footmarks were turned outwards at about the same angle as a man's.

Through his glasses Smythe was able to follow the tracks as they descended a steep rock face fully 1000 ft. high covered with snow gullies. Next they went down a small but considerably crevassed glacier, and Smythe was much impressed by the diffidence overcome and the intelligence displayed in negotiating them.

Smythe turned round and followed the tracks the other way. They came to the mouth of a small cave under some slabs. He was then alone and cut off from sight of the porters by mist, and he could not altogether suppress a ridiculous feeling that perhaps after all they were right.

Smythe said he was ashamed to admit that he stood at a distance from the cave, and threw a lump of rock into it before venturing further. Nothing happened, so he looked into its mouth. There was nothing in there, so the engine was untried. It remains so to this day.

In the long ago, say the Sherpas, they and the yaks lived happily side by side among the great heights. Then came the time when the yaks took a sudden fancy to dine off Sherpa flesh. This was too much even for ancient friendship to put up with, and an aged monk put forward a plan whereby the yaks might be exterminated.

Great bucketsful of cheap, the highly alcoholic Sherpa drink, were taken to a certain spot particularly thick with yaks. Then, from a distance, the yaks were treated to the entertaining spectacle of the Sherpas sitting about one another with swords until all, apparently, lay dead.

In reality they were "fighting" with wooden swords. At midnight Sherpas rose to their feet, picking up their wooden weapons, and replacing them with razor-sharp steel on an anvil within easy reach of the yaks. With daylight the yaks fell to goring the fierce man-wine until they became fighting drunk. They finally exterminated themselves, leaving one survivor, who was duly despatched by the monk himself.

Not a very likely tale, and the forerunner of many similar stories. But the Sherpas say that a small number of yaks were not present on that fateful day, and it is the descendants of these which still haunt the high places of the Himalayas. And maybe they do.

THE BIGGEST THIEF IN THE WORLD

Continued from page 24

He found backers, and the project was successful. The capital of Swedish Match was doubled in 1921, and then came the International Match Company with a capital of \$150 million.

The shaky economic condition of half the countries of the world gave Kresger his real opportunity. Fantastic as it may seem, the credit of the private individual was better than that of the Governments of France, Germany, Holland, Belgium and many other countries.

Where these countries could not borrow on the international market,

or only at a fantastic rate of interest, Kresger could get all he wanted cheaply and lend them the money. He conceived the brilliant idea of making loans in return for match monopolies. France (\$100 million), Poland (\$55 million), Romania (\$50 million), Turkey (\$25 million) and half a dozen other countries obtained loans in 1923-6.

The Kresger pump seemed bottomless, and all the time shareholders received dividends sufficient to make half the world come running to him with its money to invest. With a loan of \$150 million to Germany in 1930, there seemed nothing which Kresger could not do.

And the blind confidence which the financiers had in Kresger was

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"Have wanted preferably in the thirties handsome, college graduates with a past record of success. Good opportunity for the right employer."

such that he got away with bonds so crudely forged that even the signature on one of them was afterwards found to be wrongly spelt! The truth was that nobody troubled to look.

What did he spend his money on? From the appalling muddle he left, which took years for the accountants to disentangle, it was obvious that he personally got rid of \$125 million spent on pleasure alone. He earmarked a fortune to maintain a private luncheon spread out in all the big cities and resort towns of Europe and the U.S.

The sale of very substantial amounts of Krueger securities on the very morning of his death gave rise to the rumor that his suicide had been a fake and that he had salted away great sums. The experts investigating his demise said that when Krueger saw this and coming he might have sold securities and brought gold at a high price with the idea of "disappearing" — and this gold may still be unclaimed today in some safe deposits.

Such was the tangle he left behind that no one ever really discovered when the faking of balance sheets began. But over the course of years it is clear that the real earnings of his companies were less than 2 percent, whereas he was paying dividends of 5, 7 and even 10 percent.

Only once was Krueger caught — and that killed him. In 1930 the world was convulsed with economic troubles. Krueger found it in-

creasingly hard to get the credits essential to cover his true activities. He thought up a coup that would save him.

He acquired control of the Ericsson Company, and put forward to the International Telegraph and Telephone Corporation of America the idea of a monopoly. They took him on the board and put up \$10 million for the Ericsson company.

A fall in the price of Ericsson shares made the chairman of ITT nervous. He started a probe of the Ericsson balance sheets and discovered that the assets were little better than wind. The "cash" was a debt from Krueger, the assets were nothing more than claims on other companies. Krueger, in fact, had taken \$15 million from Ericsson and mortgaged another \$15 million.

The Indian bonds on which his advisers urged him to raise money were forgeries — valuable only so long as they remained in his safe. Krueger knew the end had come. He returned to Paris, where by now the creditors were waiting like anxious vultures.

A dozen men, representing the interests of millions, arranged to meet him for explanations. He didn't appear at the appointed time. They waited. The hours passed and they became anxious, and then a call to his rooms confirmed their suspicions. Unable to face them, the biggest thief and swindler of all time had blown his brains out.

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST WAR FLYERS

Continued from page 32

The pilots saw the observer wave at them from the cockpit, and then a small packet fell to the gunboat's deck. The Shorthorn circled while the observer waved again, then flew away south towards Bana.

General Townshend had his headquarters aboard the gunboat HMS *Exeagle*, and when a naval officer gave him the message Captain White had thrown he acted upon it immediately. Black smoke belched suddenly from the little warship's funnel, and salher engines worked up to full speed she steered out into mid-stream.

Soon after midnight that night, HMS *Exeagle* steamed into Amara — more than 100 miles up the river from Bana. By this time Townshend was well in advance of his own advancing army, in the heart of enemy-held territory. But with the 22 men on board standing ready at the Comet's light gun, he was able to bluff the Turks in the town into surrender and hold them there until the leading Indian troops arrived next day.

So the first stage of the British advance up the Tigris was a great success. Thanks mainly to the Australian aviators' efficient reconnaissance work, Townshend had been able to advance much farther than he had dared hope beforehand. Two Turkish gunboats were sunk in the battle, and 17 guns and nearly 2000 prisoners were captured.

The successful advance enabled a landing-ground to be made on an island in the Tigris River near Kurna. Now the *Elf* Flight's machines did not have to burn up so much petrol flying to and from Bana — they operated from Kurna in the daytime, then flew back down to Bana each evening with Townshend's despatches to be cabled back to India.

For administrative reasons, the Australian pilots were posted commissions in the Royal Flying Corps and seconded to the Indian Army. The two Indian Army pilots took over the overall control of air operations, leaving most of the flying to Peira and his men. A brick workshop for the overhaul of engines and the manufacture of spare parts was built by Arab labor at Bana, an iron hanger was erected and power-engines were brought from India.

The consolidation of the army's rudimentary air arm proceeded slowly, because of the intense heat and the risk of sunstroke. The



average temperature at Basra during the months June, July, August and September, 1915, was 105 degrees in the shade. Every morning, powder and work began at 5 am and continued until 9 am. Then there was a long rest, and work started again at 4 pm and went on into the night.

The Hispano Farmam Shortboms and Longhorns needed a lot of maintenance work to keep them flying. They were gawky pusher biplane types with hook-like wings, and their wooden frames and fabric skins decayed quickly in the Mesopotamian heat and damp. Their 70 hp Renault engines were second-hand, and also needed a lot of care.

It was fortunate for the Australians that there were no enemy aircraft in that theatre of war, as it would have been difficult to find any sort of aircraft which had a lower performance than the Farmams and yet was still capable of flight. The dangers involved in a forced landing due to engine failure were enough to worry about. In addition to the danger of dying of thirst, the marauding Arab bands which prowled the desert outside the battle zone were likely to kidnap downed pilots for ransom or cut their throats for sport.

On July 4, two new aircraft arrived at Basra — French-built Caudron biplanes, with 80 hp engines. The Australians looked them over and decided that they appeared to be very frail for operational use in such a hostile climate. But at least they were somewhat faster than the Farmams, which were unable to fly backwards when they were headed into a high wind.

The Caudrons arrived just in time for the next British offensive, which opened on July 6. After Poore and Burn in one Shortbom and Reilly and Treloar in the other had made preliminary reconnaissance, Indian infantry attacked and overran the Turkish position at Suk-ah-Sheykah.

Major Reilly and Lieutenant Mear then flew the two Caudrons up from Basra to Kurna. The next British target was the town of Nasiriyah, and Reilly and Mear flew over in one of the Caudrons and inspected the Turkish trench systems there before the attack was made on July 24.

The Gnome rotary engines of the Caudrons gave a lot of trouble over the desert, as they were air-cooled and the high temperature cut their efficiency. On July 24 Reilly made a flight over the battlefield in one Caudron, and had to make a forced landing when the engine failed over the town. He glided away northwards to put the machine down in the



"Now, remember, if you're over at the rescue mission in Kalamoon, be sure and look me up."

Good-water near Suk-ah-Sheykah, where the Indian garrison helped him out.

Work was to follow. On July 30 Reilly and Mear had to fly their Caudrons back to Basra for maintenance. They agreed to keep close together in the air for safety in case of a forced landing, but in the event they soon became separated. The faltering rotary engines forced each pilot to fly a different path.

Reilly's Caudron suffered a recurrence of its previous trouble, and he was forced to land in the desert about half-way between Nasiriyah and Basra. Luckily, the Arabs in the area had been very impressed by the succession of British victories along the river. They did not molest Reilly, and the sergeant-mechanic who flew with him managed to tinker the engine into life again. Reilly was able to take off again and finish the flight to Basra.

But Mear and Burn, in the other Caudron, were never seen again. Their engine failed a few miles past the point where Reilly went down, and Mear glided down to a landing in the open desert. Before they had a chance to try to repair the engine, they were attacked by a band of Arabs.

Like all the other machines in Mesopotamia at that time, the Caudron carried no machine-gun. Mear and Burn retreated on foot in the direction of the rifling station at Abu Salim. Armed only with their service revolvers, they held off the Arabs in a running fight.

After killing one Arab and wounding five others in a five-minute chase, one of the officers was wounded. His companion stayed to fight beside him, and the Arabs killed them together. Search parties were sent out, but no trace of their bodies was ever found. Reilly found the remains of the Caudron, backed to matchwood by the Arabs, while on a special reconnaissance a few days later, and the rest of the story was pieced together from reports by friendly Arabs.

Captain Whitt, on behalf of the AFC, accompanied a British punitive expedition which searched the nearby Arab villages for the murderers. But these men had fled, and the soldiers found none of the dead women's property in the villages. Eventually they burnt the houses of the local Sheikh, in retribution and as a warning.

The loss of Lieutenant Mear in particular was a hard blow to the officers and men of the Third Flight. He was only 25 when he died, having abandoned a very promising career as a doctor in Melbourne for a war career of adventure in the air. Only a few hours before his death he had spent a hard night tending the wounded in the hospital at Nasiriyah.

Mear might have achieved renown as a doctor once more after the war, or he might have reached high rank in the RAAF had he chosen to stay in uniform. But now he has only one claim to fame. Of more than 10,000 young Australian flyers who have died in four wars, he was the first.

For two months after the capture of Niznnyeh the pilots and ground crews of the Half Flight struggled against the heat and the force of the "shamal" wind to maintain their machines in flying trim. On August 24 more reinforcements arrived — four single-seater Martinique scouts. But their performance, too, was disappointing as the heat Peter tested one in the air on August 29, and it took 35 gallons of petrol and 25 minutes to climb to 7000 feet — and once it was up there, its best speed was only 50 miles an hour.

The most projected stage in Townsend's advance was an attack on the town of Kut-al-Amara. The army's air component — now reinforced by a flight of seaplanes and redesignated No 30 Squadron, RFC — was moved upriver upon its support. A Shortforn was used for a pioneering attempt at aerial photography over Kut, but the only available printing-paper was useless. The army relied on visual reconnaissance when the attack went forward.

Townsend's Indian troops won another brilliant tactical success. A cavalry force turned the Turk's flank, and a bayonet charge drove them back in a rout. They lost heavily in killed and prisoners, and left 15 guns behind. By October 5, 1915, Townsend's pursuing advance guard was half-way between Kut and Baghdad.

By now there was a growing shortage of aircraft in the new squadron. The seaplanes found it difficult to operate from the river, and the remaining Caudron and the Longhorn were normally out of action for one reason or another. Thus two of the new Martinique

were wrecked in crashes, and the Caudron force-landed behind the Turkish lines. Lieutenant Treloar and his observer were taken prisoner. Now only Peter and White were left of the original pilots of the Half Flight.

White had a narrow escape soon afterwards, when he was flying over the Turkish defences at Ctesiphon. His Parnian's engine began to misfire badly, and he was forced to land well behind the enemy lines. There was no time to repair it — but it was still developing enough power to taxi the machine, though not onough to get it off the ground.

Scarcely thus surrender outright, White decided to try to taxi back towards the British lines. With his observer, Captain F. C. C. Yeats-Brown of the Indian Army, standing in the cockpit to guide him and fight off pursuers with a rifle, he started up and rolled away in a cloud of dust.

The Parnian ran before the wind for 15 miles, over sandhills and ridges, around rock outcrops and camel-thorn scrub. The crippled machine spluttered past the 2000 Turkish cavalry encamped at Kutayyah, and through a gap in the barbed wire along the front line. The cumbersome Renault engine then picked up power again, and White lifted off and flew the rest of the way home.

White and Yeats-Brown made a good team. A few weeks later, they located a line of enemy field batteries by gliding down over the guns as though they had been hit. At 1000 feet they pounce-d the guns, throttled and ran for home as the Turks saw through the ruse.

But on November 13 their luck came to an end. They volunteered to fly out on the Longhorn and cut the enemy's communications by landing outside Baghdad and blowing up a line of telegraph poles. The Longhorn was damaged on landing, and when Yeats-Brown blew down two of the posts the fallen wires fouled its wings. He and White were captured by the Arabs and handed over to the Turks.

A week later Townsend's army began the battle for Ctesiphon. But now, at last, the tide turned against them. Unknown to Townsend the enemy had been heavily reinforced, and although the Indian troops captured Ctesiphon they were unable to hold it. Townsend withdrew to Kut, and was besieged there with about 13,000 men.

Peter, the last of the AFC pilots, flew the last of the Half Flight's Shortforns at Ctesiphon. When the siege of Kut began, 3 Squadron was ordered to withdraw down the river.

With its meagre collection of semi-survivable aircraft, the squadron then embarked on the first major military air-lift in history. Peter formed a plan to use the aircraft to carry vital stores across the Turkish lines to the beleaguered garrison.

The squadron's efficient new BE2c aircraft could each carry two 50-pound sacks of grain at a time slung under the lower wings. Peter loaded tightly-filled sacks made loose outer sacks, so that when the former burst on landing the latter stopped the grain from scattering.

New members of the original Half Flight who were left in Kut created rails to grade the grain, and 70-pound mail-stones were dropped in by home-made parachutes. The machines also dropped wireless parts, rifle cleaners, medical supplies, money, mail and tobacco.

But it was all in vain. The 19,000 pounds of food which the aircraft dropped in 140 sorties did not go far among 13,000 men. German aircraft appeared in Mesopotamia at last and began to interfere with the supply drop, and on April 29, 1916, Townsend finally surrendered. Seven of the nine Austrians in Kut later died in Turkish captivity, though White and Treloar survived.

Captain Peter and the mechanics left back at Basra were the only survivors of the AFC's Half Flight. After the fall of Kut they were recalled to Egypt to join the newly-formed first full squadron of the AFC. Peter was later transferred to the RFC in England, where he became a test pilot and later commanded a training squadron.



"The little boy followed him home, and now he wants to keep him."

SUB HERO'S LAST COMMAND Continued from page 53

Gilmore was relying on poor visibility to make a stealthy attack.

But the target ship was half the size estimated, and twice as close. And apparently, some of the Japanese crew had vision almost as sharp as London Doves. The Growler had just worked her way into a favorable firing position. Range below 1000 yards, angle on the bow, 130 degrees starboard. Then a lookout on the 900-ton supply ship Hayasaki spotted her.

The Jap skipper had no illusions about successfully ending a submarine. Her 50-calibre machine gun and 3-inch deck gun might be enough to hold off a surface attack, but once the American slid under the waves, it would just be a matter of time. The Hayasaki's skipper rapped commands. Obviously, his vessel swung about and plunged at top speed on collision course with the surfaced sub.

Seven men were on the Growler's bridge. But visibility had worsened. No one saw the target ship turn until too late. The redoubtable below detected the Hayasaki's change of course, but then time had run out for launching torpedoes.

"Here she comes!" howled Ensign Edward "Red" Williams, and Fireman Bill Kelley, one of the three lookouts, yelled, "The bastard's gonna run!" The Jap freighter had loomed out of the blackness off their starboard bow and was bearing down on them at full speed.

"Left full rudder!" Gilmore roared down through the hatch to the helmsman and sounded the collision alarm. As the sub turned hard left at 18 knots the enemy freighter shared on a wall, and came crashing down, her grinding weight crunching 18 feet of Growler's bow at rightangles to port and buckling a further 30-feet of like cheap cardboard.

The Growler lurched and rolled. Lieutenant Commander Schade somersaulted from the conning tower to the control room deck and nearly knocked himself senseless. Up on the bridge, Gilmore grabbed the rail and hauled himself to his feet.

The collision had stirred up waves which surged over the sub's rolling hull and drenched the bridge with spray. Gilmore shook his head clear as time to see the Jap crew rushing frantically to bring their deck guns to bear.

As the locked vessels suddenly rocked apart on the rising swell, the Hayasaki's machine gun opened up,

bullets clanging against submarine steel. Gilmore swept a glance about him, at three lookouts, the quarter master, his two deck officers. "Clear the bridge," he shouted. "All hands below!"

They had no choice but to dive — fast. Doves and the quartermaster whipped through the hatch. At the foot of the ladder Doves glanced over his shoulder up the stairs, but nobody was following him. Instead someone top-side shouted "Oh, God, I'm hit!"

The quartermaster scrambled back up, reached through the hatch and felt around in the dark. His hand closed on a working body — one of the lookouts, missing. The machine gun still riddled the sub, bullets sponged and whined off bridge and conning tower. The quartermaster dragged the lookout down through the hatch.

Throughout the ship men waited for the familiar blazon signal for

driving — shoooge — shoooge. And still it didn't sound.

The quartermaster again groped around the blacked-out bridge. He dragged a second wounded lookout safely below. Commander Schade grabbed the ladder rungs and purred up. "Captain?" He paused. "Howed?"

On the blood-and-spray-washed bridge, Ensign Red Williams' bullet-torn body slumped over the rail. Commander Gilmore blinked at it, momentarily forgetting his own wounds. Painfully he stoove to crawl to a second lifeless body, Fireman Bill Kelley.

Gilmore stretched both hands to the slippery rail, managed to draw himself upright. He rubbed the red film from his eyes and saw that the Jap ship had backed off some distance so her gunners could bring their deck cannon to bear. If that happened, Gilmore knew it would be the end.

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A spasm of coughing seized the Commander. He felt his life ebbing. But his mind was still sharp. It would take precious minutes to carry him below — minutes during which a major rescue from the Jap three-mast might puncture the Growler's pressure hull. . . . He had to reach the hatch. "Arise," he gasped. "Arise, take her down."

The roar of wind and sea and machine gun drowned his feeble voice. When he tried again his mouth filled with blood. He spat it out and concentrated all his strength into a final effort. This time the command rang loud and clear to the men below. Loud, clear and unforgettable: "Take her down, Schade. TAKE HER DOWN."

On hearing the skipper's voice, Schade had made an instinctive move to rush topside. But that would have been disobedience. Schade had his orders. Take her down. For a tortured fraction of a second he fought his own inner battle, but his duty was to the sub and her crew. Sick at the sound of it, Schade kept his voice steady enough to meet the order.

There was no time for mourning. The Haystack's Janch shells screeched harmlessly over the already diving sub, but a machine-gun bullet ripped through the conning tower and as the submerged water spurted down into the control room, soon half a foot of water footed about the deck.

Holding the Growler submerged, Schade directed fast, temporary repairs. No one mentioned the Old Man during these moments but he was on everyone's mind. No one panicked, no one gripped and in half an hour the flood was under control. Only then did Schade address all hands and explain what had happened. The Lord's Prayer was said for the three lost men and then the Growler surfaced.

"For distinguished gallantry and valor above and beyond the call of duty. . . ." And the citation for the Congressional Medal of Honor, posthumously awarded. Commander Howard Gilmore ended this way: "In his final living moments, Commander Gilmore gave his last order: 'Take her down'. The Growler dived; severely damaged but under control, she was brought to port by her well-trained crew inspired by the courageous fighting spirit of their dead captain."

The sub sank a further 8000 tons under Commander Arnold Schade and 1000 tons under Schade's successor. She submerged in the Portman Straits west on November 8, 1944, and failed to return.

THEFT FROM THE CYCLOPS BUDDHA

Continued from page 12

Her lips were pink-lipped.

Ebbing felt sheepish when he reached her side. "Chaeon purpura-remade (Glad to meet you)," he intoned.

"We can speak English," she said. Her name was Em and she was an skunk, or hoozie, at the Q&B Prominent Beer Hall a block from Seoul's Sejong Hotel. A college girl, serving beer and hints of sex every night, she worked in a happy zone between waitress and prostitute and was now rushing home to beat Seoul's midnight curfew.

Any American in Seoul who owned a vehicle could take his pick of women, because their lawlessness couldn't get off the streets by curfew time without help and if caught outside after midnight they faced heavy fines. Ebbing like this girl and told her that he had a Jeep. It was her idea that they go to his apartment.

Em was Eurasian, sultry but sensible, a quick-headed girl who was amazed that American's found her exotic. She had a wild streak, and she and Ebbing hit it off immediately. In his apartment, she made a meal of the preliminaries, stripping down to panties and bra, then strutting around in the moonlight from outside, letting him up chonggong and study the broad, taut firmness of her body.

When they made love, she gave and demanded everything. It was starkly physical, almost a contest of endurance, and she was very inventive. Sunrise was illuminating his bedroom before she heaved a heavy sigh of contentment and slept.

Mike Ebbing didn't go to work that day or the next. Neither of them ventured outdoors. In fact, never left his bedroom.

Em was a scrappy, argumentative young girl who'd studied jewelry-cutting in school and who frankly admitted that she yearned for the glitzing, expensive things in life. Shortly after their mutually compatible physical relationship began, she talked Ebbing into skipping work again, and taking her for a three-day vacation down to the Bopchusa Temple Grounds in remote mountains 70 miles south of Seoul.

Here, the couple registered as "Mr and Mrs" at a country yagwon (inn) and continued their intense love making. They were walking around the silent, brooding temple ground one morning when Em pointed up at the glimmering green eye of the huge

Buddha. "Imagine the pleasure we could have if we owned something like that," she said.

Ebbing and his girl expended their stay for several days while he studied the statue and its emerald eye from all directions. He found a local workman who'd helped install the emerald 10 years earlier and learned that the adhesive holding it in place, battered by weather, was due to be replaced soon. He studied the patterns of the National Police Guards and learned that they prowled the grounds only sporadically.

Mike Ebbing probably didn't know himself when he crossed the thin dividing line between playing with his idea and seriously planning to loot the emerald. But it's possible he might never have tried his daring theft except for what happened to him when he returned to Seoul.

He was fired from his job. "No way around it, Mike," apologized Joe Valdez. "It's not that you're drunk half the time and don't come to work. It's not that you're checked up with that babe the other half of the time and don't come to

work either. But the company just isn't making any money, Mike, so I've got to let you go."

Ebbing spent the next week in a rock quarry on the outskirts of Seoul, learning how to "ragged" down the face of a cliff with ropes and tackle. Once, he took a 40-foot fall without breaking anything. Shaken, he picked himself up and tried again.

Rehearsing his "human fly" act in an abandoned quarry was hard enough, but he knew it would be a thousand times harder when he went into action for real against the high face of the standing Buddha.

Ebbing made other preparations in a city like Seoul. It wasn't hard to find a "fixer", even for the constant emerald on the region. He worked out a deal with a group of Koreans who traveled regularly to Japan whereby he would get 60 percent of whatever they could peddle the jewel for.

Ebbing also made certain that his passport and Em's were brought up to date, and that he and the girl had the necessary immunities and other documents for international



"I wonder how the movie ended?"

travel. He'd decided to burn his bridges with Korea and make a fast getaway.

Mike Ebbing intended to make his assault on the face of the "Cyclops" Buddha after the midnight curfew on May 5, 1973, a Friday. That day, they arrived in his Jeep at the village adjacent to the Bopchosa Temple Ground and checked into the nearest inn.

It was the rainy season, which meant a minimum of tourists and others in the area, including police. They spent the early evening hours in their room alone. Afterward Ebbing looked down at the mude body of the girl beside him, wondering if he was making a mistake.

Midnight Ebbing smashed the lock on the temple gate with his hammer and coaxed his gear-laden Jeep up the narrow roadway to the base of the looming statue. The drizzle muffled his sounds and the dark, windblown temple ground felt eerie, foreboding.

Ignoring his anxiety, Ebbing worked hastily in the downpour to ready his rappelling gear, swapping quick glances with the girl. It took him three tries to heave a beam up to the "crown" on the Buddha's head,

secure it, and begin pulling himself upward, hand over hand.

Ebbing's statue-climb was sheer physical torture. The sun-drenched rope gouged deep, bloody ruts into his hands and forearms. He kept slipping on the moist surface of the stone Buddha, several times nearly breaking free and falling. It took 45 grueling minutes to reach the crown atop the great cyclops head, and half an hour longer to swing out in front of the face and the emerald eye. All this time, a dizzying fan of bright rays on him and the rain pounded into his face, rendering his vision.

A routine, truck-borne patrol of National Police caught Ebbing in his "human fly" maneuverings at the worst possible moment, just as he was pulling the emerald disc from its mooring and jamming it into his pocket.

The police were tough professionals, trained to use only as much force as necessary, and these women were divided by Ebbing himself, who first looked toward them with disbelief, then came scrambling down the side of the statue, and finally grabbed the girl and started running.

While Ebbing was outlined in the

glare of their spotlight, the police closed in slowly and methodically. When he dragged the girl away from the yellow beam into darkening shadows, they charged. And when Ebbing climbed into his Jeep, they began shooting wildly, their machine flashes stabbing like pinpoints of fire, their bullets crunching into the thin metal skin of his vehicle.

"Hang on, and stay low!" Ebbing screamed at the girl. Fumbling with the ignition, he started the jeep just as a spray of gunfire shattered the windshield in front of him, bombarding the pair with shards of flying glass. Something grazed the side of his neck, drawing blood, while he floorboarded the Jeep and shot forward.

The rear of the police truck was sticking out into the road! Several fast-running policemen, charging with their weapons at port-arms, were caught in front of Ebbing. The cop with the megaphone scurried for cover, shouting "Stop running! Stop running or we will shoot to kill!"

At the last possible moment, the policemen in Ebbing's path darted out of the way as the Jeep roared down on them. They triggered their weapons on full automatic.

Ebbing slammed into the police truck with dizzying force, heaving it aside in an ear-shattering shower of sparks. Suddenly, Ebbing and the girl were in the clear, hurtling downhill from the temple ground, leaving the police behind, bullets flying over them as they gazed in speed.

Ebbing handled the Jeep in frantic, desperate movements, keeping the headlights off, bouncing and skidding down the darkened roadway. "We've got the thing, Em! We've got the emerald!"

"They'll chase us, Mike. We must hide! Let's leave the Jeep!"

"No. No, I don't think so! Those cops didn't have a radio and we knocked out their truck! Listen, Em, I think we can make the four-hour drive to Kimpo Airport and get a commercial flight out of the country before they catch up with us.

The moon came out, when he reached the deserted, four-lane Pusan-Seoul highway and turned north. Em just stared at him silently as he increased speed to 70. 80. It was 3:11 a.m. There was a Northwest Orient Airlines flight leaving Seoul's Kimpo Airport at 7:30.

To the girl's amazement, no police vehicles appeared on the empty road behind them for seven hours in the night. For more than two hours, Mike Ebbing drove toward Seoul.



They left the highway at 5.30 am as the outskirts of the capital began to spread around them. And in the suburbs, with the first pink streaks of daylight lightening the sky above them, the Jeep's engine coughed and spluttered. They came to a halt on an urban street beginning to fill with early morning passers-by — out of gas!

"Damn!" Ebbing thought aloud. The carful was over now. He didn't think he could make the airport in time.

He grabbed the girl's arm. They ran, shivering in ward that followed the run, stumbling and leaving on each other the support. A mass of Korean architecture swallowed them up, and after a few moments they could hear only the clapping sounds of their own feet. They weren't being followed.

They emerged on a boulevard near the centre of the Yong Dae Po district. A taxi cab sat on the kerb in front of them — an ancient, beaten-up '59 Plymouth.

"Mike! We have money! Plenty of money!"

Ebbing reached around the overcoat in his pocket and came out with a wad of 500-won bills. "We've got cab fare and air fare, baby! All we need!"

She breathed a sigh of relief and they piled into the cab. The driver was a nervous young man with a mop of hair obscuring his eyes. He shrugged at their soaked, ragged clothing and his indifference changed to a grin when Ebbing spotted four South Korean Air Force F-4D Panthers taking off, their wings glinting against the sunrise.

"Can we reach the airport terminal?" Eric asked.

"I think so, baby. We've got our passports and papers. We'll bluff our way aboard the flight."

"What about those fighter planes?"

"They aren't in communication with the police. They wouldn't mess with an airliner, anyway."

The new Kampo terminal was several thousand yards from the airport gate, across a black and muddy stretch of unpaved road. They were approaching it when a National Police truck appeared in the rear-view mirror.

Ebbing stiffened. It was too late to wonder whether they were being chased because the cops had identified them or because the driver was exceeding the speed limit. The truck was gaining, pressing relentlessly closer to the old cab.

The driver followed Ebbing's outstretched hand until the cab was

pulling to a halt in front of the commercial terminal — with the police truck still a quarter of a mile behind them.

"Maybe we can still outrun them!" Ebbing shouted. He and the girl dived into the building, their drenched clothing leaving pools of water on the fresh tile of the place. They ran in an erratic zigzag sprint toward the Northwest ticket counter and when they arrived he had the money out. Through a plateglass window, he saw the Northwest Boeing 707 warming up, one of the two mobile stairways already being withdrawn from its fuselage.

"We've got to get on that flight!" Ebbing gasped. "Damn it, we have to get to Tokyo right away!"

"I cannot sell you a ticket," the agent said flatly.

"What? Why not? I've got the money! Right here!" In a corner of one eye, Ebbing saw the police truck parking outside.

"The two of you have obviously been drinking," the agent said. "Further, you have been out in the rain. You are soaked from head to toe. Your clothing is a shambles. You have no baggage. You are obviously drunk, and it is against the rules of the International Air Transport Association to—"

"Damn it, I'll give you a hundred dollar tip!"

"You do not understand—"

"I'll give you two hundred bucks!"

"You are too late," he shrugged.

"The flight to Tokyo is leaving now."

Inspector Hong-Kyun Kim of the National Police offered each of them a cigarette, Ebbing accepted. They'd been given khaki uniforms, starched and dry, to replace their drenched clothing. The inside of the police station was drab and muggy, and the glittering, \$378,000 emerald looked out of place, shining up at them from Kim's desk.

The inspector looked at them intently.

"You are free to go," he said.

Norber Ebbing nor Eric understood. Ebbing rote awkwardly. "What?"

"I said, you are free to go."

"You mean—"

"Minister Ebbing, we have our emerald back and we have learned now to keep it properly guarded. Without it, you have nothing to gain by leaving this country where you have lived in comfort for years, and I think we can punish you most effectively by locking you out."

"I see no reason why Korean taxpayers should bear the expense of keeping you in prison. We don't want your kind here and we don't want the woman, either. We shall arrange for both of you to be on the next Northwest Airlines flight for Tokyo, and you can consider yourself deported — never to be permitted to return."

The police inspector was true to his word. As this is written, Mike Ebbing and Eric are in Tokyo, where the Americans — minus his stolen emerald "eye" — is having a tough time getting settled.



"On the economy tour you fly to twenty three countries but you don't land in any of them."

THE LEAD NIGHTINGALE

Continued from page 32

Her blouse was torn and her white breasts pushed up and down with her rapid breathing. I couldn't see any scratches or bruises, not yet. Perhaps I was in time.

I saw Big Lon at that moment.

He could have been playing. He was on his knees and his enormous hands were trapped under a log. I walked over to him and helped roll the log, both of our shoulders together, pushing and heaving until it slowly slid away.

He staggered to his feet, stood there making moaning noises in his throat, looking at his torn hands. The heavy timber must have shattered every bone.

He stumbled away, looking neither to right or left. I'll never forget the animal whinnying that came from out of him.

Quickly I tossed my jacket over Marina and steered her along a path. She was crying softly, but she wasn't hysterical. We didn't say a word and I took her to her home and stood looking at her. What could anyone say?

"Don't come in, Uncle Ralph,

please," she begged. "Leave it to me, will you?"

I headed off, not sure if I was doing the right thing. I crept inside my house as not to wake up Eda. What could I say to her, even?

Sleep wouldn't come. I was missing Big Lon trapped by the log, his mangled hands. He'd never play a guitar again, that was for sure. And he'd find it hard to nip and tear at women, too.

When I was a kid, tree-falls were fairly common. Trees were seen and left to fall by their own motion caught by the wind. A dangerous practice.

Someone had remembered the tree-felling art. It had happened exactly at the place where Carmen Cheeta had been abused. But how had Big Lon been noticed to stand in just the right place at the right moment, and what had closed his ears to the ripping of the big tree before it fell?

I sat up, shocked. If Marina had opened her blouse and moaned and promised and held him long enough with the sight of her body, Big Lon wouldn't have seen anything else. He would only have heard her tantalizing words.

Marina would have seen her

mother's sons sometimes. Maybe Andre lacked the guts to tell her what happened to her mother, but Carmen could have taken her into her confidence and told her all about Big Lon and his predilection for young, thrusting bodies. Carmen Cheeta and Marina could have easily arranged the tree fall between them. The tree could have been seen through during the day and picked to hide the act.

What had Marina said outside her home? "Leave it to her!" It was hard to accept the fact that she wasn't a child any more. And she had her mother's spirit as well as her looks. She was strong willed and determined, with a will all of her own.

I lay down again. The women were close-mouthed. Who would ever guess? I couldn't be absolutely certain myself — except that it was just too much of a coincidence.

Lon would leave Mount Slide now. Linda would take him away back to the city with his cruel hands broken beyond repair. But his golden larynx was still intact. Now he was quite harmless. Oh, how the women would laugh. After 19 years of weeping, a tree fell on the nightingale.

I closed my eyes, thinking of the golden wattle blowing in the wind. *

ASHES OF VENGEANCE

Continued from page 44

"Just my luck that you followed me in, Gr—" Gil stopped abruptly, "—or did you expect trouble?"

"Yeah," Marshall gave him a twisted grin. "Something Dunstan said about a gal that you both used to be sweet on in Hard Rock. It's been my experience that partners fall out for two reasons, women or gold."

"That's the way it was." Gil couldn't understand how that story could come out so much later. "Dunstan bent a shovel over my head. He left me for dead and saddled our gold back to Hard Rock. And the gal — did he tell you that she liked him with the gold better than me without the gold? Did he tell you that all three were gone when I got back to Hard Rock?"

Gil flashed a twisted grin to match Marshall's. "He left me with a vow to kill him when we next met." Gil tried to ignore his itching scalp-ear.

"All right," Marshall said, sitting down wearily, "you got it in for him. But how do you know that Dunstan attacked your wife or burned down your home? What makes you think she died in that fire?"



"Julie wouldn't leave the ranch — she wouldn't run away from trouble."

"More than likely she's running after trouble."

"What do you mean?" Gil demanded, his voice menacing — not liking the implication.

"I mean, if the fire wasn't an accident, she probably went after the guy to kill him."

"She wouldn't have left this." Gil pulled the fire-blackened damnger from his vester pocket, tossed it on the table. "I gave that to Julie for protection. She wouldn't have lost this," he tossed the gold chain and looked straight at the damnger, "unless there was trouble. Durston probably took it from her—" Town tilted Gil's eyes, "—along with everything else. He probably left her unconscious or worse, fired the house, and rode off!"

With his eyes fixed on the damnger, the gold chain and locket, Marshall said, again, "Gil, I'm sorry. Mighty sorry."

"You're sorry?" Gil's hand whipped his 45 from its holster. "Strange how sorry a man can get, especially when he's expecting to be on the deadly end of a 45. Well, you'll be sorry with your last breath."

Marshall coolly pulled one side of his longhorn mustache. "Tell me one more thing. How do you know Durston was at your ranch?"

"I found his dog, Wolf. He's in my ranch yard with a bullet hole in his head. Durston was there all right. I'll not rest until I see him dead."

"And you want to kill me because I stopped you yesterday afternoon? Because it's my job to enforce the law in Sundown?"

"No! Because you jailed me and gave Durston time to get Julie and burn down my ranch home."

"Where were your ranch hands?"

"Out on the range. Julie was alone. I can see her — I can see him—" Gil couldn't bear the sight of what his mind's eye saw, "—riding on now, knowing he couldn't have hurt me more. You gave him the chance he wanted."

"Suppose I agree to track him down. Bring him back for trial?"

Gil could hardly believe his ears. This couldn't be B. Marshall talking. "You bargained for your life?"

"No. Trying to save you from becoming a killer. Son, I've killed as sheriff, and I don't like it — but those killings don't grow at me. Private killings never let me rest. Why do you think I spend so much time in this office?"

Marshall turned on to answer his own question. "It gives me a feeling of belonging. Son, we all need that. It saves my mind about the other. So does this book." He pulled the opened bible on the table. "We all need that too."

"You can't save your life with words." Gil leveled his 45.

"Son, kill me and you'll be a wanted gunslinger. Let me tell you, a gunslinger's life is a short one. If a bullet doesn't get him, age does. Killers live mostly in stories told at the Poke O'Gold and other saloons. Stories told by real men who build the West, the men who live long enough to have something behind. Son, you don't know what it is to kill a man—"

"I'm going to find out, but I'll give you a chance to draw."

"Listen to me!" Marshall barked, "I know what I'm talking about. Everyone around knows I'm a reformed killer. I've killed more men than people remember. More than I can forget."

"I wake up in a cold sweat — waking. I hadn't lived fast enough. I see faces with death twisting their features. I see my own evil crowding in the dark."

"The reformed sinner," Gil muttered. "The worst kind."

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"Unh-unh, the worst kind is the unformed snore. Horrible though my dreams are, they are getting less horrible since I reformed. But they'll never be pretty."

He gave Gil a wry smile. "Here I am preaching — while you're taking for action. Let's go back to your ranch and watch those rums before you start throwing lead. Jude can take care of herself," he pointed to the fire-blackened darranger, "with or without that."

"She's no bigger than a mouse." There was a catch in Gil's voice. Marshall had made a mistake. He talking about Jude had boxed Gil's need for revenge. "And I intended to see that she didn't have to take care of herself. Taking care of her was my job. You prevented me from doing my job. And for that, I'm going to kill you."

Marshall slipped both hands on the table in front of him.

Gil stared unbelievably at the big man. Ev Marshall, companion and now sheriff of Sandown. "You're yellow!"

Marshall nodded. "We're all yellow when we know we're wrong. I was wrong in holding you in jail until Dunstan got out of town. What more can I say? I was doing the best I could. I thought Dunstan was a harmless freighter." His lips formed a contemptuous grin. "All right, fine!"

Gil listened to the old clock, calmly ticking off Marshall's last seconds. Urging Gil on with this. Urging him after Dunstan. His righteousness still good!

"Don't leave me dangling here," Marshall boomed. "God damn you, fine!"

Suddenly, Gil didn't want to fire.

always talked my gun."

Gil stared at him, open-mouthed, water-eyed. "Why didn't you tell me?"

"Would you have believed me?" Marshall gave him a broad grin. "You'd have thought I was trying to see my side."

"Yeah, Sheriff — I guess so."

Marshall's grin faded. He eased his .45's cylinder back into place. In a flash it was levelled at Gil. "All right. Kimbers. Break!"

Gun-grud, Gil slowly raised his hands. Marshall's lips twitched, then broke into another grin.

"That's to prove you can't trust anybody — I guess." He jammed his .45 into his holster and shoved out his hand. "I really don't know why I did that." He pushed back his Sisson. "Hmmm, I do know. Like a woman wants the last word, every gambler wants to leave a showdown a stop-draw."

It was too warm in here. Gil turned the knob behind him and nudged the door open. The cold air felt good on the back of his neck. Then he heard two horses run up outside.

He peeked around. Swung the door wide. He rushed across the porch and down the three steps. A wind-blown girl with cold-flicked hair was striding the rear horse.

"Jude!" She almost fell into Gil's arms.

He held her close, for a brief moment — until her shaking loosened. He raised her chin, brushed a stray strand of honey-blond hair from her straggled bangs and watched her wide brown eyes fill with tears.

Her lips quivered. "Darling, I — I —" Her voice broke, but she yellowed and rushed on bravely. "I killed Joe Dunstan."

She pointed to the second horse. Ev Marshall was examining its dead, belly-swelled rider.

Jude sobbed. "I—I killed him." She turned her tear-stained face up to Gil. "He attacked me. We struggled — knocked over a lamp. He laughed at my derringer. I fired... He died as he swung into his saddle. His dog came at me. I fired again." She sobbed against her husband's chest.

She went on brokenly. "It — it was too late to fight the fire. I saddled Bragg, hoping I'd meet you."

"I went over Ridge Trail. The rums sent me back the same way — with kill in my heart," Gil said.

"Jude, you had to do it. I wish I had been there to do it for you."

Snowd! Ev Marshall had his hands on their shoulders. "I wish I had been there to do it for both of you."

Civil rights for early surfers

AUSTRALIAN SURFERS owe a lot to William H. Goehar, a Mundy newspaper editor at the turn of the century, who won the freedom of the beaches for them.

In Goehar's day, daylight sunbathing was forbidden in most parts of Australia. Heavy life-pulling nets stretched, and the law compelled surfers to swim in the early morning and to be out of the water by 8 a.m.

Goehar decided to test the power of this legislation. He scribbled publicly at Mundy Beach on three successive Sundays in September, 1902, at a challenge to the police and the courts.

Goehar was not arrested or charged on any of the days. He had an interview later with the Police Commissioner, and was able to win his point in the discussion.

After Goehar's stand, people were allowed to bather freely in public at any time of the day. Since then, surfing in Australia has never looked back.

Marshall's glance dropped to his .45 on the table. He considered it as if — as if he were about to grab for it. "Put it in your holster," Gil ordered.

Without raising Marshall's hand slowly reached for his .45 and slipped it into his holster. Again he placed his hands spread-fingered on the table.

"You sitting or standing?" Gil demanded.

"I'm sitting — hoping you'll listen to me."

Gil shot a glance at the old clock in the corner. Its numbers had in the dim light, but a faithfully ticked off time. He was tired of waiting, tired of yearning, listening.

He tried to remember Jude's theory that killing — even in self-defence is a dead's part. His itching scalp-pear goaded him.

"Stand up, Marshall!" Gil's heart started pounding again.

When Marshall got to his feet, Gil said, "Ready?" His hand flashed to his holster and came away with his .45.

He didn't want to kill this woman who time had pushed beyond his prime. He wasn't going to fire. But it wasn't pity that stopped him.

He saw that he himself had been wrong. Ev Marshall wasn't yellow — it takes a brave man to admit his mistakes. Marshall had guts. He was living this out according to code. He didn't crack under stress and ask for pity. He didn't ask — he ordered. To the very end, he ordered — even his own death.

Gil knew what a wonderful thing he was experiencing. What a wonderful thing to tell his — but he'd have no children now that Jude was gone.

He dropped his .45 into his holster. "Come on, Sheriff. I'm going to track down Joe Dunstan. I need the law to make it legal."

"Sure, I'm glad you did that."

Gil took off his Sisson, wiped the sweat from his forehead, and scratched his scalp-pear. "Come on."

"Sure. Wait until I load this." Ev Marshall waded the cylinder out of his .45 and slipped in six bullets. He and sheepishly, "When I read my bible, I

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YOU'VE GOT TO BE QUICK

Continued from page 58

It had started off badly for him, because surprise is always a distinct advantage. But he gradually took command, willing to grow stronger and more vicious as he realized the odds were against him.

Seven brothers, three of them born hot-heads always at the ready to argue or fight, had given him the advantage of unlimited experience when it came to looking after himself. It had served him well, the rough apprenticeship of early teens.

At last he broke a gap on them and the rest was easy. The bottle ended with him standing over them during their confusion.

One of his attackers was sitting up and groaning, his head in one hand and fending for missing teeth with the other. Beside him, bent over a fence retching dryly in agonizing heaves, was another sick form.

The third attacker was the one Macey was interested in. He was holding on to the light post, his head bent forward as he gasped for breath, blood dribbling from his mashed nose.

"You had enough?" Macey pointed, moving closer. "Or do you want to try me by yourself this time? I could handle a dozen like you three - no kidding."

The other shook his head dolefully, waging tentatively at his nose with the back of his hand. "I've had enough," he said thickly and he watched Macey move still closer.

"Well I can't," Macey said harshly, trying to make his voice sound convincing. "I'm going to make an example of you, because you're the troublemaker." He slung the man away from the post. "I feel sorry for your mates. You ought to do your own dirty work."

"No more!" the other said hurriedly. He swayed as he tried to break away. "We only meant to rough you up a little."

"You could have murdered me. I'm going to teach you a lesson so that next time you might think twice about gassing up on a bloke." Macey drew his fist back and hit him. It was a stinging blow really, just to emphasize his disgust and contempt.

"No! No more!" the other choked, stumbling away. "Don't hit me again!"

Macey reached out and jerked him back again by his shirt. "All right then, we'll shake on it and forget it ever happened - that okay with you?"

The other nodded, confusion and

worries in his eyes. He thrust out his arm hesitantly and they grasped hands.

"The girl's mine," Macey said softly. "I don't want you annoying her or hanging around her."

He turned and walked off. He didn't have to look back. He knew the three weren't interested in him any more.

He'd have no more trouble from any of them again, the handshake sealed it. They had both learnt something tonight. Would either of them know anything more from it?

In his own instance, he was surprised to realize that a fellow, no matter how good a worker he was or how smart and tough he thought he was, still had to depend on a woman sometimes - like getting a job for instance.

But that didn't really bother him because the more he thought about it he knew they were both only helping each other and he couldn't think of anything he enjoyed doing more.

THE UNSAFE SAFE

Continued from page 58

Inspector O'Hare stepped forward and strode into the safe. Burke raised Curtis from the wheeler.

The safe was empty.

"But it must be there," said Curtis, running his hand over the bottom of the safe.

"Of course it must be," said Hodgkins, "and it is."

"Don't be bloody silly," said the Inspector. "It's gone. You can see that."

Burke lowered Curtis back into his chair.

"Well, if it's still there make it come back," said Curtis.

"Simple," said Burke. "But first I'd like to show you a small item we found in Manser's room." He drew from his pocket a small black, rubber object.

"What the hell is that?" and the Inspector.

"This is the business end of one of those suction cup arrows that children play with. I - or rather Mr Hodgkins and I - found it in the wastepaper basket in Manser's room."

"Well, what of it? What's that got to do with the theft of my diamonds?" said Curtis.

"Just cut your mind back a few hours, Mr Curtis," said Burke. "Manser has just told you that the safe is empty. He picked you up and showed you the empty safe. You went out to the telephone in the hall and rang the police. Manser was in here all the time - alone. He simply

reached into the safe and with this suction cup pulled off the back wall of the safe this," said Donald, reaching into the safe, "and took out the diamonds."

Donald drew his right hand from the safe holding the book and his left hand holding the suction cup sticking to the tray.

"But you took the tray out," said Curtis.

"I took a tray out," Donald said. "Two trays went in but only one came out. If you'd like to gather around I'll show you how it was done."

Donald again cupped the two trays together, placed the book on the top-most tray, the one with the beveled edge, and placed trays and book on the bottom of the safe. He then picked up the book, slid the top tray out of the other tray and placed the book down on the bottom tray. He handed the top tray to the inspector.

"I now push the book to the back of the safe," he said. "But I do it by pushing the bottom tray and raising it as I slide it backwards. Then, presto, the book is gone and the tray becomes the back wall of the safe, but at the same time it forms a small compartment as deep as one of its raised edges. Mr. Curtis had already noticed that the tray fitted perfectly from the point of view of width. What he didn't realize was that the bottom of the second tray—the one Manners kept in the kitchen on top of the refrigerator out of sight—was exactly the same dimensions as the back wall of the safe, and would form a perfect second wall concealing the diamonds."

"Incredible," said Curtis. "Very clever, Burke," said Inspector O'Han.

"Remarkable," said Hodgkins. "Blat," said Manners, who had watched the demonstration unnoticed from the hall door.

"Have your blasted diamonds back," he said. "I never had a chance to get out of them. Maybe things will go easier for me this way." He turned to Burke. "You're pretty smart for a copper," he said.

"Well," said Burke, "I knew the diamonds had to be stolen at a time when the safe was open. It couldn't have been done when they were put away last weekend because Mr. Curtis watched the whole operation. And yet when the safe was next opened they seem to have vanished. But that was impossible because the safe had not been interfered with in the meantime. Therefore they had to be still in the safe."

"Then you know the safe had

been interfered with?" suggested Hodgkins.

"Yes, exactly," said Burke, picking up the thread again. "The safe *had* been. Now, how could anyone interfere with the safe? There couldn't have been a secret compartment in the tray, but someone could have made one in the safe. It had to be Manners' work, and as soon as I saw those curious trays I knew exactly how he had done it. Finding the rubber suction cup in his room just tied up the loose ends."

"Dad tells me you did some very clever detective work today," said Burns, pointing to it.

"Well, it wasn't so hard," said Donald Burke. "You know, things just fell into place like a jigsaw puzzle."

Hodgkins spluttered a mouthful of hot tea.

"Steady there," said Donald Burke. "Well, I'm going to have a hot shower and get in my pyjamas. It's been an exhausting day. Don't let anyone ever tell you that brainwork isn't as tiring as physical work."

When he had gone Burns kissed Hodgkins on the cheek. "Thanks, dad," she said.

"It wasn't easy, believe me," Hodgkins muttered.

STRIP FOR ACTION

Continued from page 26

It was a sad looking vehicle, the windshield starred with bullet holes, the scoty scorch of some explosion spread across one side of the body. The engine wheezed and even above the engine noise he could hear the bubble of the radiator.

The five men in it had a hunted, wolfish appearance. Their faces under the blue and white checked headcloths were gaunt and unshaven, their eyes bloodshot. There was fear in the set of their bodies as they crouched rather than sat in the command car as it rolled nearer to the spreading smoke of the burning plane.

They were only 30 feet from him as he eased his head forward with the pistol in it. His muscles began to tense as he prepared for action.

With the fedayeen so close he could not turn his head to where Manners lurked in a jumble of rocks, behind him and halfway down the slope towards the plane. Ingrid lay 50 yards to his right among another such patch of thorn scrub, her clothes smeared with sand till she blended totally into the desert.



"Let's see what kind of power it has on Mils!"

Steve waited for the car to roll over the slope and down towards the wreck. When it was halfway down the slope, Elzoin's car would spit 9 mm death and he would fire into the backs of the men in the car. It wasn't much of a plan but it could work.

He watched the car in that concentration as it came within 10 feet of him. And stopped.

The first man in it had risen and stood in the car staring down at the wreck. There was a fierce satisfaction in the way they looked at the burning plane.

The Arab manning the heavy machine gun cocked it with a strong emphasis. He looked down at the commander who sat beside the driver and spit harsh Arabic.

The commander had one of the long Arab fleas, big topped with shik-hi teeth. Some manna showed on the camouflage tunic he wore, but an ease of authority sat on him and the manna was not necessary to mark him as the leader. His large mouth smiled humorously at the question and he nodded.

The heavy machine gun stuttered thunderously. Tracer arched towards the wreck and the sun glinted on a spray of spotted cartridge cases. Two of the other Arabs aimed their stubby, kamaz clipped Kalashnikov assault rifles and fired bursts in the direction of the plane.

Steve lay in the shadow of the command car. Brain patterned red-hot around him as the machine gun fired. The rank of cordite mingled with the smells of petrol, oil and blood in his nostrils. A rash of sweat and fear came off the men in the command car. Cold sweat trickled in the small of Steve's back.

The plan was blown if the car didn't cross the ridge. It would not come into Elzoin's field of fire. From 10 feet Steve knew that he could get one or two of the Arabs before a casual sweep of a Kalashnikov snatched him with 7.62 mm bullets. Elzoin might be able to handle the rest but his chances were poor once the heavy machine gun started to batter his aerial cover with steel-poketed slugs.

"I'll count to 10, Steve thought, then I'll start shooting.

He started counting. One, two, three.

The machine gun fired another burst and stopped. The gunner cursed and fed a fresh belt into the action.

Four, five, six.

A harsh order from the commander stopped the firing. The Arabs

slowly began to climb out of the command car. Two of them climbed out on the far side and disappeared out of Steve's view. He cursed silently and gathered his muscles to spring, the counting discarded.

An Arab shouted hoarsely, then another. Gathered to leap, Steve looked up.

The Arabs were grinning. Not pleasant grins. Smiling grins might have described it, broiled grins, smug grins. Before he turned his head to follow their eyes Steve knew what they were looking at.

Ingrid had stood up from her hiding place among the rocks. She stood freely, proudly, her head held up high. As Steve looked she ran hands up through her long coppery hair till they were high above her head, her shoulders braced back, her breasts jutting arrogantly.

Ingrid reached down to her waist and jerked the flimsy blouse out of her skirt. With swift movements she pulled the fabric away from her body.

One of the Arabs dropped his rifle and began to walk quickly, urgently along the ridge.

Ingrid reached behind her, her shoulders straining back against each other. Her breasts lifted and spread. The blouse fell free and she flung it aside with an arrogant snap of her wrist. Even at a range of 50 yards Steve could see her pink nipples jutting from her creamy skin.

The Arabs began to run as her hands dropped to the belt of her micro skirt, her legs moving in slow, measured, subtly intoxicating undulations. Only one of them still held his rifle.

Steve came out of the scrub like a coiled spring releasing. He leapt into the command car, clambered his way up behind the heavy machine gun. His breath came in hoarse gasps.

The Arabs were spread across the slope renning. They called to one another in voices like hissing jackals. Steve landed back on the action of the gun, his fingers found the trigger.

The gun bucketed and leaped. Tracer spouted out across the slope into the running Arabs. Steve hopped around them as the bullet storm found their flesh. A man screamed hoarsely, another dropped in his tracks as the heavy slugs smashed him apart. Two, side by side in the nose, whirled around, their backs black with shock and fear. One of them splashed off a burst from his Kalashnikov and Steve felt the icy burn of lead across his ribs. Then the bullet storm engulfed them.

One was left. The commander. After one startled glance over his shoulder, he had continued to run towards Ingrid. Only now he ran in short, unpedestrian steps, and as he ran he drew a heavy automatic from his tunic.

Steve ran desperately to swing the gun across the ridge-top to drop the man, but the mud fountainer missed and missed again.

Then the round eye of the night contained both Ingrid and the Arab. Her hand was still on the belt of her lap-overs micro-skirt and her hips continued in a pale shadow of the undulations that had lured four men to death. Now as the Arab reached her she screamed hoarsely, stark fear grating like filen on Steve's ears.

And she jerked the skirt free, flung it into the face of the Arab and buried herself sideways.

Steve was caught half out of the command car, too far from the gun. The Arab was sniggering, clawing the cloth away from his face, yelling shrilly in rage. The automatic in his hand spit three times blindly.

And Elzoin came out of the rocks with his life-sapping.

Steve reached Ingrid first. She crouched on the hot sand of the slope, apparently unaware of her near nakedness, her hands at either side of her face and horror in her eyes and she stared at the dead Arab.

As Steve reached her she whimpered deep in her throat and flung herself upwards into his arms.

"Now Gott," she whispered. "Oh, Mein Gott. The blood."

"It's all right," he said. "It's all right. It's over."

"That was quite a trick," Elzoin said behind them. "We would have been dead but for her."

The girl had stopped shuddering in his arms. He glanced down at her and saw that the color was coming back to her face. She pushed closer to him if it were possible and there was a trace of the old impudence in her face as she looked up at him.

"Did you catch my act, Steve?"

Steve let out his breath in a gasped exhalation.

"Catch it," he said. "I'll never forget it."

"I mean do it again," she said. "Only next time to a more select audience. Oh, yes, one."

Steve felt all the tension breaking out of him in one great shout of laughter. Behind him he heard Elzoin laughing, too. Slowly and with great care he bent his mouth to hers and she responded eagerly.

"Darling," she said. "It's a date."

